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A REVISED AND GREATLY ENLARGED EDITION OF THE

## HISTORY OF THE SECESSION CHURCH

BY THE REV. JOHN M'KERROW, D.D.,

BRIDGE-OF-TEITH.

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THE Church of the Secession has now existed for upwards of a hundred years, increasing gradually in extent and influence. The original congregations were only four.—The United Associate Church alone, at the present time, numbers well nigh four hundred congregations;—has about eighty preachers, labouring in stations, or constantly pervading the country in all directions, to proclaim the word of life, and inculcate the duties of holiness;—and, while she aids, with funds or with agents, not a few Missionary Societies, at home or abroad, in their labours of love for the good of mankind, and is connected with various congregations or churches, which have sprung from the Secession, in Ireland, in the United States, and in Nova Scotia, she has also Missionaries and Congregations of her own in Canada and the West Indies, founded by her exertions, and sustained by her supplies. A full, accurate, and impartial view of her history is therefore, on many accounts, to be greatly desired.

This desideratum the Rev. John M'Kerrow, an intelligent, talented, and very respectable minister of the body, has supplied. With laborious assiduity, he has searched the records of the Secession,—perused those historical documents, which have been put forth by herself, from time to time, in her different branches;—availed himself of such publications, on various subjects, controversial, doctrinal, or hortatory, as fall into the hands of few, but are necessary to give a complete



and satisfactory view of her spirit and transactions ;—sought information from every person, and every quarter, whence it might be obtained,—and has now formed all into a continuous and interesting narrative, which has secured the approbation of those who are best acquainted with her annals, and which, it is hoped, will be felt to be an object of curiosity, it not of partial favour, to every liberal mind. To the republication of the former account, he has added (to complete the higher statistics of this religious community) a new chapter connected with the literature of the Secession, which, it may be presumed, must augment the interest of the work ; may perhaps surprise some ; but will not fail to gratify the candid and philosophic of all ranks, by showing, that learning is not confined to any one class of society, or to any one section of the Christian Church.

GLASGOW : 110, BRUNSWICK STREET.

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## RECOMMENDATION.

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THE HISTORY of the SECESSION CHURCH, by the Rev. JOHN M'KERROW (of which a new edition is now called for), has, we are aware, been the fruit of much research, as well as of the study of several years ;—is greatly approved of by those who are best acquainted with the facts of which it treats ;—and we have full freedom in recommending it to the attention of the Public, and the perusal of Members of our Church, as an able, impartial, and interesting account of the affairs which it professes to narrate.

JAMES PEDDIE, D.D.  
JOHN MITCHELL, D.D.  
JOHN BROWN, D.D.  
DONALD FRASER, D.D.

A. FULLARTON & Co., 110, Brunswick Street, Glasgow ; 5, Nicolson Street, Edinburgh ; 97, High Street, Dumfries ; 12, Crown Street, Aberdeen ; and Barrack Street, Dundee.

THE HISTORY  
OF THE  
RISE, PROGRESS, AND PRINCIPLES  
OF  
THE RELIEF CHURCH,  
EMBRACING NOTICES OF THE  
OTHER RELIGIOUS DENOMINATIONS IN SCOTLAND.

BY THE  
REV. GAVIN STRUTHERS, D.D.,  
ANDERSTON, GLASGOW.

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GLASGOW:  
A. FULLARTON AND CO., 110, BRUNSWICK STREET;  
5, NICOLSON STREET, EDINBURGH; AND  
12, KING'S SQUARE, GOSWELL STREET ROAD, LONDON.

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FULLARTON AND CO. PRINTERS, VILLAFIELD.





## P R E F A C E.

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CIRCUMSTANCES which are well known to the Synod have led the Author to write the History of the Relief Church. He had neither vanity nor leisure to have devoted himself to a thorough study of its records, had not the nearness of his residence to the legal agents who conducted the Campbelton case—detailed at the close of the volume—brought him under the necessity of examining facts and documents, so as to be able, when asked, to give an answer on the spot to the false allegations which were made, and also to state the truth to those who were employed by the congregation, in conducting the process. It would have been a tedious matter to have gone to Kintyre for information upon every litigated point. As the action before the civil courts was an attempt to strip the Campbelton Church of its property, on the ground of a departure from Old Relief Principles, it was necessary that the rise of the Denomination and the opinions of its early fathers should be studied, and investigated with considerable care. The first Minute Book of the Body, being either lost, or at least not known to be in existence, it was only in pamphlets, fugitive pieces, or in the works of hostile authors, that the principles of the Relief Church could be found, and from thence they were laboriously dug.

At the successful termination of the process in 1839, several members of Synod urged the propriety of throwing into the form of a History, the facts which had been so thoroughly sifted by counsel at the bar of the Court of Session. Such a work was certainly needed,

and the Synod had long felt the necessity of something being done, to embody in a more permanent form than tradition or ephemeral publications, the opinions and history of ministers and churches, who in their day had nobly vindicated truth, liberty, and love, when these things were "fallen in the streets," and when Scotland was eaten up of bigotry and intolerance. It was among the Relief that the catholic and evangelical principles of Whitefield, mainly in this quarter of the island, found a resting-place. The recollection of these things was rapidly falling into oblivion, and unless some one of the third generation of Relief ministers put on record what he had heard from the lips of those who had conversed with its founders, the chain of evidence would soon either be broken or greatly impaired.

In complying with a request so strenuously pled, and diffidently acceded to, far more difficulties were ultimately met with than what had been anticipated. The paucity of recorded facts, after a somewhat patient research, may justly be complained of, and the form of the narrative may be different from what others would have adopted. It is humbly suggested, however, that the time for producing a regular History of the Relief Church is not yet arrived. It was requisite first of all, to write something akin to Annals, and to engross into the text, facts and documents, which, after being known and acknowledged as true, will yet take their place as general and undisputed maxims in some future History of the Synod.

The Relief denomination could not be known without ample notices of the religious state of the country at the time when it originated, and of the other sects and parties by whom it was surrounded, with whom in many things it agreed, while yet it conscientiously contended for its own peculiarities, as being more liberal and scriptural. In examining into these things, the writings of each religious party have been applied to for authentic information, and the "Testimonies" of particular churches have been quoted as unquestionable authorities, embodying within them the spirit of the times. There has been no attempt made to modify or overstate any of the opinions of the different religious parties of the land. They are described as faithfully as possible at different eras, and the fine mollifying and harmonizing influence of time, discussion, the word of truth,

and of the Spirit of God, are permitted gradually to display themselves as they happily did in the course of revolving years. A writer of history is not an apologist, nor an anticipator of changes for good or evil, but gives an honest chronicle of things as they occur.

When so many facts are recorded, no gift short of infallibility could prevent numerous mistakes ; but these are in no case wilfully or knowingly introduced. Truth is always sought after, and cowardice and time-serving principles to any individual or to any party, have neither restrained nor perverted its statement. Having lived among many of the latter scenes which are described, and being personally known to not a few of their principal actors, it has required considerable watchfulness against prejudices and prepossessions to give a fair and simple narrative of what has occurred during the first portion of the present century, which has been so full of important and stirring events. He has readily commended when he thought commendation was due ; and writing as he has been doing of *man*, usually influenced by mingled motives, he has seldom had cause to condemn without some alleviation of censure. For the spirit, tenor, and language, of the volume, he holds himself responsible, as he has submitted his manuscript to no one. It is not his religious party, but himself that must be considered as giving an opinion on persons or passing events, and he only asks from others the same candour which he has endeavoured to extend to them.

Whatever is the weakness or ability with which this history is executed, the principles of the Relief fathers will be found the diamond, though set in the basest metal. In this volume materials are at least provided, and sources from whence information may be obtained are pointed out, so that some other historiographer may yet prosecute the subject with more ease and success, and throw the glow of genius around the principles and actions of the best of men, to whom the religious public of Scotland owe a debt of gratitude which they are slow to repay.

To his numerous friends who have aided him by sending pamphlets and procuring information, the Author returns his grateful thanks. Amid the incessant demands made upon a minister's time in a populous town, he could with difficulty have secured leisure to make the necessary researches without the assistance of others.



The work—with all its imperfections—is laid before the public, and particularly before the Relief Churches, with a sincere desire to promote the spread of those liberal and evangelical principles which are now becoming exceedingly popular in various sections of the church of Christ. Their early advocates, after much unmerited abuse, are now reaping a portion of their due reward. Were they alive, they would be gratified to see the revolution which at last has been wrought on the public mind, which is now undergoing the popularizing influence of the gospel, prior to the time when the spiritual kingdom of Jesus shall be universally introduced. Speedily may the old Relief motto, adopted by Hutchison, be universally inscribed on the Church's banners, and openly worn in its affectionate spirit :

In necessariis unitas,  
In non necessariis libertas,  
In utrisque charitas.

G. S.

ANDERSTON, GLASGOW, }  
6th May, 1843. }

## CONTENTS.

---

### CHAP. I.

#### THOMAS GILLESPIE—HIS PARENTAGE—CONVERSION AND EDUCATION FOR THE MINISTRY.

Born at Clearburn—Father dies—Piety of his Mother—grieved with his want of religion—Introduces him to Boston—Saving change produced—resolves to be a minister—Joins the Secession Hall—leaves it—goes to Northampton—studies under Doddridge—licensed and ordained by the English Dissenters.—1—6.

### CHAP. II.

#### GILLESPIE'S ADMISSION INTO CONNECTION WITH THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND.

Returns to Scotland—Presented to the parish of Carnock—Signs the Confession, with an Explanation as to the power of the Civil Magistrate—Whitefield, same year, visits Scotland—Disruption between him and the Seceders—Throws his influence into the Church of Scotland—A Revival follows at Cambuslang and Kilsyth—Seceders condemn the Work as of Satan—probable reason of this—Gillespie much engaged in the Kilsyth Revival—testifies that it is the Work of God—Currie rewarded with £60 for writing against the Seceders.—7—31.

### CHAP. III.

#### GILLESPIE'S OPINIONS, CHARACTER, AND MINISTERIAL LABOURS AT CARNOCK.

A liberal Presbyterian—zealous for the Headship of Christ—opposed to all persecution for the sake of Conscience—an advocate for the members of a church electing their Pastor—a Calvinist—favourable to instant repentance—opposed to supernatural revelations—a good man.—32—40.

### CHAP. IV.

#### STATE OF RELIGION AND OF RELIGIOUS PARTIES IN BRITAIN PRIOR TO GILLESPIE'S DEPOSITION.

Reformation in England—the King came in room of the Pope—Charles I. in distress summons together the Westminster Assembly—Intolerant—Presbyterianism

set up in England—speedily put down—Error and Corruption pervade the English Dissenters—causes of it—Reformation in Scotland—steeped in sufferings and blood—Continual Contest between the King inclining to Episcopacy, and the Covenanters zealous for the popular system of Presbytery—Revolution settlement—William more liberal than the Covenanters—Error creeps into Scotland from England—re-enactment of the Law of Patronage—rise of the Secession—Popular measures resorted to for the purpose of gaining them back—the split among the Seceders—its injurious effects.—41—59.

## CHAP. V.

### THE CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH LED TO THE SEPARATION OF GILLESPIE FROM THE ESTABLISHMENT.

Gillespie entered the church with delusive conceptions of her independence and freedom—presentations given effect to—riding committees—augmentation of stipends asked—Patronage then had not freedom of Conscience to carry it into effect—Moderates resolve they shall act or be stripped of office—Cuming chosen Moderator for this end—the Royal Commissioner enjoins the Assembly to insist on absolute submission—Dunfermline Presbytery sent from the bar of the Assembly to admit Mr. Richardson—*five* made a quorum for a concealed purpose—Presbytery disobedient—Plead the dictates of Conscience—one to be deposed—Gillespie, for his fidelity, singled out—his admirable composure when he receives his sentence—leaves the Church of Scotland—the pithy salutation of his wife—his first sermon as a Dissenter—Spence, Hunter, and Daling suspended from their judicial functions—the pompous and worthless speech with which Cuming closed the Assembly—the three leaders in the deposition of Gillespie themselves afterwards strikingly humbled.—71—99.

## CHAP. VI.

### DEPOSITION OF GILLESPIE.

Principle at issue—unlimited obedience to the sentences of church courts—Patronage merely a branch of it—Settlement of Mr. Richardson at Inverkeithing—Evangelical party had not freedom of Conscience to carry it into effect—Moderates resolve they shall act or be stripped of office—Cuming chosen Moderator for this end—the Royal Commissioner enjoins the Assembly to insist on absolute submission—Dunfermline Presbytery sent from the bar of the Assembly to admit Mr. Richardson—*five* made a quorum for a concealed purpose—Presbytery disobedient—Plead the dictates of Conscience—one to be deposed—Gillespie, for his fidelity, singled out—his admirable composure when he receives his sentence—leaves the Church of Scotland—the pithy salutation of his wife—his first sermon as a Dissenter—Spence, Hunter, and Daling suspended from their judicial functions—the pompous and worthless speech with which Cuming closed the Assembly—the three leaders in the deposition of Gillespie themselves afterwards strikingly humbled.—71—99.

## CHAP. VII.

### THE FAILURE OF THE ATTEMPT TO REMOVE FROM GILLESPIE THE SENTENCE OF DEPOSITION, AND RESTORE HIM TO HIS FORMER STANDING IN THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND.

Preaches during Summer in the open air—driven to the highway—gets a place of worship fitted up in Dunfermline—Controversy about Gillespie's deposition—state endowments the cause of the stringent measures which led to his ejection—Wotherspoon's *Characteristics* written in his defence—Letter of sympathy from President Edwards—the Moderates dislike such preaching as Gillespie's—attempt to restore him—Royal Commissioner interferes—Letter from Gillespie on the merits of his case—refuses to ask re-admission into the Church of Scotland.—100—121.

## CHAP. VIII.

## GILLESPIE A DISSENTER.

He sets up a Church on liberal Presbyterian principles—holds communion with all who hold the Head, Christ—his old friends refuse to assist him—his opinion of them—dispenses the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper without any ministerial aid—Cheering letter from President Edwards in the midst of his difficulties—beneficial purposes served by his continuing for years to labour alone.—122—130.

## CHAP. IX.

## THE REV. THOMAS BOSTON'S ACCESSION.

Boston, senior, a native of Dunse—when a child, lay with his father in prison to keep him company—disliked all persecution for the sake of conscience—opposed to Patronage—a friend of free communion—alienated in a great measure, like Wilson of Maxton, and Davidson of Galashiels, from Establishments—his son, Thomas, early manifests a liking to the same principles—settled at Ettrick—translated to Oxnam—the town of Jedburgh anxious to obtain him—Marquis of Lothian will not accede—Boston acts upon his Dissenting principles—gives in his demission—accepts of a Call from the people of Jedburgh—is admitted—town dissolved in joy—first Sacrament on the Ana—scene august and impressive—Gillespie comes to the second dispensation of the Supper—touching meeting between Boston and Gillespie in the pulpit.—131—153.

## CHAP. X.

## ERECTION OF COLINGSBURGH CHURCH AND FORMATION OF THE RELIEF PRESBYTERY.

Assembly enjoin the translation of Dr. Chalmers—People dissent from the Establishment, and build a church at Colingsburgh—Call Scott of Hexham—disappointed—invite Colier—accepts of their Call—Relief Presbytery formed at Colingsburgh, 22d October, 1761—their first minute—several abusive mistakes corrected by it.—154—165.

## CHAP. XI.

## RELIGIOUS STATE OF SCOTLAND AT THE FORMATION OF THE RELIEF PRESBYTERY IN 1761, AND THE RELATION WHICH IT ASSUMED TOWARDS OTHER RELIGIOUS DENOMINATIONS.

Rising prosperity of Scotland produces corruption—Moderates cold to religion, enthusiastic for the stage—Public opinion compels the church to act against Home, the author of Douglas, and others—Seceders—their close communion principles—Spread of the Burghers and Antiburghers—Cameronians—antigovernment principles—History of Macmillan—Persecuting tenets of the Auchensaugh Covenant—Glasites—introduce enlightened views about the Kingdom of Christ—The Metaphysics of Sandeman injurious—Baptists—first Baptisms in the Clyde—Old Scotch Independents—David Dale leaves the Relief, and introduces



the Denomination into Glasgow—Wesleyans—Dr. Erskine prevents their spread by exposing their Arminianism—Scotch Episcopalians—under disgrace for their disloyalty—persecuted—Catholics—almost extinct—Relief amid the intolerant principles of the age took up a position of love—sadly badgered by all—serve a good end.—166—189.

## CHAP. XII.

### ACCESSION OF VARIOUS CONGREGATIONS TO THE RELIEF PRESBYTERY; AND THE SCHISM OVERTURE OF THE ASSEMBLY.

Blair-Logie—induction of Mr. Warden, 1762—a truly pious man—his Death in 1768, a sad stroke to the infant Presbytery—Auchtermuchty—organized 1763—call Mr. Thomas Scott—Bellshill—springs from the unpopular settlement of Baillie—apply to the Relief—obtain Mr. Simpson as their Minister, who was a licentiate of the Church of Scotland—intercommuned by the Assembly—Edinburgh, College-street—History of its rise—Candidates, Baine and Cruden—Baine's Call—Resigns his church in Paisley—reasons—introduced into College-street by Gillespie—Summoned to the Assembly to account for his conduct—his trial—appeals to the Public in a pungent Pamphlet—his account of the Relief—Campbelton—History of the Lowlanders in Kintyre—their first Ministers—the appointment of their Minister lost because they touch the Teinds—Unacceptable Ministers intruded upon them—After a struggle of 20 years against spiritual oppression, leave the Establishment—join the Relief—denied materials to build their church—get them by sea—the more they are persecuted the more they prosper—obtain Pinkerton as their first Pastor—Glasgow, Albion-street—Came off from the Wynd Church—their affections fixed on Boston—he dies when they were pressing forward his Call—Confusion ensues—Cruden appointed—popular—Rapid accession of other churches—Assembly alarmed, bring in the Schism overture to arrest Dissent—An attempt made to modify the sentence of deposition passed upon Gillespie—foolish—it fails.—190—231.

## CHAP. XIII.

### BEGINNING OF TROUBLES ABOUT TERMS OF COMMUNION—DEATH OF COLIER—ELECTION OF COWAN AND REJECTION OF PIRIE.

Dunse church lodge a complaint against Mr. Monteith, their Minister for assisting an Independent Minister—Presbytery approve of Communion with all visible saints—Boston's Letter on the point—same subject becomes a matter of discussion in the case of Pirie—his history—first connected with the Antiburghers—next with the Burghers—writes against the Covenants—Libelled—enlightened views about Church Establishments—wishes to join the Relief—called by Blair-Logie church—rejected as being unsound—produces a painful dispute in the Relief Presbytery—Blair-Logie leaves the body—Pirie becomes their Minister—Death of Colier—Colingsburgh calls Cowan—not a happy settlement—Pirie's History concluded.—232—246.

## CHAP. XIV.

### FORMATION OF TWO PRESBYTERIES—FIRST MEETING OF SYNOD—THE CONTROVERSY WHICH ENSUED ABOUT RELIEF PRINCIPLES—THE RISE OF THE BEREAN CHURCH.

Seceders—attack the Relief—Lamentable Controversy—Consultative Meeting of the Eastern and Western Presbyteries—Cowan submits a Motion on Relief

terms of Communion—deliverance—First Meeting of Synod, 1773—Terms of Communion vindicated—attacked by M'Millan—Bennet's Pamphlet against the Relief or Scotch Methodists—answered by a "Lover of Truth"—Ramsay publishes "The Relief Scheme Considered"—History of Hutchison—he answers Ramsay—Burghers attack the Relief in their Judicial Testimony—quickly replied to by Hutchison—Walker of Pollokshaws next hurls a spear at the Relief—Hutchison repels the attack—carries the war into the enemy's camp—publishes the Messiah's Kingdom—Rise of the Berean Church—History of its founder, Barclay—his opinions.—248—269.

## CHAP. XV.

## RELIEF PRINCIPLES—THEIR AGREEMENT AND DISAGREEMENT WITH THOSE OF OTHER RELIGIOUS DENOMINATIONS.

Points of agreement between the Secession and Relief—Principles of the Relief Church—Christ the only King and Lawgiver of his Church—The Church distinct from earthly kingdoms—Magistrates should not interfere with it—Presbyterian—opposed to the Principles of the National Covenant, the persecuting portions of the Confession, and the binding obligation of the Covenants on posterity.—270—284.

## CHAP. XVI.

## EXCLUSION OF COWAN—DEATH OF GILLESPIE—CONSEQUENCES OF THE SCHISM OVERTURE—BELL COMES TO GLASGOW.

Cowan follows schismatical courses—skulks from the Church courts—is intercommunicated—Colingsburgh Church renounces connection with the Synod—Cowan applies to be received—rejected—at his Death, Gellatley, a deposed Relief Minister, tries to form a party—Publishes abusive Pamphlets against the Synod—History of Colingsburgh Church—Gillespie's Death—his Grave—Review of his Character and Ministry—a base attempt is made to drive his Congregation from their Meeting-house—successful—build another Church—Assembly get the walls of the old Church—Schism Overture carried under a new form in the absence of Principal Robertson—he gets it arrested—Graham's able Pamphlet against Patronage—Accession of St. Ninians and Kilmarnock—want of Preachers—evils therefrom—Bell comes to Glasgow in the face of a sentence of Synod—stands alone for several years—his case fixes the Synodical Law as to Translations.—285—305.

## CHAP. XVII.

## CONSEQUENCES OF MR. BELL'S COMING TO GLASGOW—REPEAL OF THE PENAL STATUTES AGAINST THE ROMANISTS—BELL AND HUTCHISON ON TOLERATION.

Bell comes to Glasgow at a very eventful time—Notice given that Government is about to relax the Penal Laws against the Catholics—Scotch Penal Anti-popery Statutes—Anti-popery riots—Church Courts and Corporations pass Resolutions—Bell begins a course of Anti-popery Sermons—Alarms—Principal Campbell publishes an Address in behalf of Toleration—Persecution of Principal Robertson—his appeal to the generosity of the Assembly ineffectual—withdraws his motion—Government yield to popular clamour—England is encouraged to demand



the "Repeal of the Popish Bill"—Riots in London—Attempt to concuss Parliament—London in flames—Lord George Gordon—Hutchison, after the Anti-popery Riots, publishes a Pamphlet against Ramsay, Walker, and Bell—his views on Toleration liberalized by the Anti-popish anarchy.—306—326.

### CHAP. XVIII.

GENERAL ATTEMPT TO GET QUIT OF PATRONAGE—INCREASE OF THE RELIEF—BUCHANITES—SLAVE TRADE.

The Machinery which was put in operation against Popery turned against Patronage—Principal Robertson retires as Leader from the Assembly—Contest for Leadership—Macknight pays court to the Evangelical side of the Assembly—Hill triumphant—binds Patronage firmer than before upon the Church—History of Patronage—Increase of the Relief—History of Mrs. Buchan—makes a Convert of Mr. White of Irvine—He is Deposed—Sect driven from Irvine—their extravagant opinions—long Fast—waiting to be taken up with Christ—Persecuted—from the Parish of Closeburn remove into Galloway—in spite of all her vaunting, Mrs. Buchan dies—Buried by an order from a Magistrate—White goes to America—party break up—Amid sectarian disputes, the general sympathies of the country roused to extinguish the Slave trade—Relief Synod enter with spirit into the measure—its History—ultimate success.—327—351.

### CHAP. XIX.

SIGNING OF THE CONFESSION—AYRSHIRE HERESIES—SMITH OF DUNFERMLINE, HIS APOSTACY, AND RECEPTION INTO THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND.

Dispute about signing Confessions of Faith, both in England and Scotland—begun in Scotland by Ferguson, Kilwinning—he is Libelled by the Drummer of Beith—Compromise—Publications of *Christianus* and Walker—M'Gill's Essay on the Death of Christ—origin of the process of Heresy against him—he submits—affair gently dealt with by the Synod—Laity take it up—attempt to Libel him by four representatives, supported by funds collected for the purpose—their utter failure—Smith of Dunfermline becomes partially infected with the Ayrshire Heresies—measures taken against him—bolts to the Establishment—carries his Church with him on account of the money he had upon it—Relief Publications against the Heresies of the age—Synod makes a new and more stringent law as to signing the Confession.—352—367.

### CHAP. XX.

DEATH OF MR. BAINE—HIS CHARACTER—INTRODUCTION OF THE HYMNS.

Baine dies in the 80th year of his age—his attainments and character—a man of great decision—dedicated a very remarkable Sermon to Foote the stage-player—much respected by his brethren—his ideas of the spiritual nature of Christ's Kingdom became clearer as he advanced in life—History of the Introduction of Hymns into the worship of the Churches in Scotland—Relief Hymns—mode of their Introduction.—368—377.

## CHAP. XXI.

## EFFECTS OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.

Its effects stupendous—in France it shook almost to atoms every thing civil and sacred—in Scotland it quickly puts an end to the Ayrshire Heresies—The Clergy and Aristocracy rally round every doctrine and law connected with the Church—among the great body of the people it generates a wish for Reform—among Dissenters, Relief, Burghers, and Antiburghers, Anti-Establishment views make rapid progress—Old and New Light Controversy—Haldane becomes enamoured of French politics—obtains Evangelical views—sells his estate to engage in a Mission on a great scale to the East Indies—thwarted—turns his attention to Scotland—sets up Home Missions—eventually organizes Independent Churches.—378—392.

## CHAP. XXII.

## MISSIONARY EXERTIONS WHICH FOLLOWED THE FRENCH REVOLUTION—RELIEF HIGHLAND MISSION—BREAKING UP OF THE TABERNACLE SCHEME.

Institution of London Missionary Society—many Missionary Societies instituted in Scotland—attempt of the Relief to introduce the Gospel into the Highlands—send a missionary at the request of Lady Glenorchy to Easdale—People remarkably awakened by “Alleine’s Alarm”—persecuted as *mad*—missionaries could get no spot on which to build a church—driven from the Island—Recommence their mission at Southend, Kintyre—Immense crowds follow the missionaries down towards Cowal—the mission deeply injured by a political accusation got up against one of its missionaries—the Haldaneites commence a preaching tour along the north-east coast of Scotland—Itinerancies commenced in various districts—opposed by the other Denominations—Scheme not well constructed—too expensive—Haldane tries to curb expenses—becomes a Baptist—it breaks into two parts—one of them becomes “the Congregational Union.”—393—407.

## CHAP. XXIII.

## STATE OF DISSENT AT THE BEGINNING OF THE PRESENT CENTURY—BIBLE SOCIETY—OLD AND NEW LIGHT PROCESS—DEATH OF HUTCHISON, BELL, PINKERTON, DUN, STRUTHERS.

Dissenters powerful—their number—favourable to the Bible Society—Separation of the Old and New Light Seceders—Perth process—better known by the title, Aikman against Craigdallie—the various phases which it assumed—Lord Eldon lays down a new principle for the decision of Church cases—Court cannot apply it because the Old Light cannot show a change of principle on the part of the New Light—Biographical Notices of Hutchison, Bell, Pinkerton, Dun, Struthers, who follow each other quickly to the grave—Synod greatly weakened—the French war diverts students from becoming candidates for the ministry—Government augments the small livings of the Church of Scotland.—408—425.

## CHAP. XXIV.

THE DAWN OF RETURNING FREEDOM AFTER THE FRENCH REVOLUTION—REFORMS IN THE RELIEF DENOMINATION—RELIEF DIVINITY HALL—ORGAN CONTROVERSY.

The genius of Liberty again appears, after 15 years stupor, to animate the press—Pitt dies of a broken heart—Fox follows him to the grave—Missions, as the cradle of Freedom, are attempted to be suppressed—Sidmouth's bill—Relief partake of the healthy tone of religious feeling—Resolve to awaken their people to their principles—Improvement in the mode of training young men for the ministry—Constitution of churches—Widows' fund—new church in Halifax—unfortunate failure—want of a Divinity Hall begins to be felt—Mr. Stewart lives to see it—his Character—subject taken up by Mr. Kirkwood—Church of Scotland shut up the Synod to the measure—Hall appointed—Doctor James Thomson chosen Professor—course of study—Laws and regulations of Synod revised and adopted—mode of signing the Confession—Home Mission revived—Organ Controversy.—420—443.

## CHAP. XXV.

STATE OF THE COUNTRY AFTER PEACE WITH FRANCE—UNION OF THE SECE-  
DERS—GAIRLOCH HERESY—APOCRYPHAL CONTROVERSY—REFORM BILL.

Prosperity short—Corn Bill—Mercantile distress—Radical Reform—Moderates become more liberal—Proposed union of all Evangelical Dissenters—terminates in the Union of the two great branches of the Secession—Orthodox preaching becomes fashionable—Apocryphal Controversy—Churchmen on one side, and Dissenters on the other—reason of this—Abrogation of the Test Act—strangely opposed by a party in the Church of Scotland—Catholic emancipation—Duke of Wellington's speech on the occasion—Dissenting Ministers favourable—the Church Ministers, in general, opposed to it—gain thereby popularity with the Laity—The Catholic Relief Bill paves the way for considering if all sects should not stand in the same relation to Government—produces the Voluntary Controversy—a sickly courting of excitement leads to the Gairloch Heresy—terminates in the grossest extravagances—Church of Scotland casts some of the Heretics out—proclaims herself a reforming Church—William IV. ascends the throne—Earl Grey and the Reform Bill—Evangelical party gaining upon the Moderates by the power of public opinion—obtain their first victory in the election of Mr. Bell as procurator.—444—468.

## CHAP. XXVI.

THE REFORM BILL—ITS INFLUENCE UPON RELIGIOUS PARTIES—VETO LAW—  
ENDOWMENTS—DUMFRIES RELIEF CHURCH PROCESS.

Reform Bill gives fresh life to discussions about Establishments—Voluntary Associations—Church alarmed—In 1833, when the cry for Reform was loud, the *veto* law is first proposed—Dr. W. Thomson's speech on the occasion—measure all but carried—Ministers of Parliamentary churches recognised as members of Church courts—effect of this—Reformation of the Irish Church—Parliamentary Committee on Patronage in the Church of Scotland—appointed for one thing, and report upon another—Veto law carried 1834—Chapel-of-ease Ministers re-



ceived—additional endowments—Union between the Secession and Relief churches—Hopes of the Church of Scotland very sanguine—Dissenters invited to join the Church and share in the endowments to be gotten for newly erected churches—Get from Lord Melbourne a Commission to inquire into Church accommodation and Pastoral Superintendence—Dumfries Relief Church case.—467—483.

## CHAP. XXVII.

## THE CAMPBELTON CASE—CONCLUDING REMARKS.

Sketch of the History of the Campbelton Relief Church—Efforts to get it back into the Establishment—Origin of the attempt, 1835, to alienate it from the Relief to the Church of Scotland—Case as it came before the Church courts—Their judgment—Carried to the Civil courts—First, the Process of Interim possession—Secondly, the Action of Declarator—The Congregation successful—Their Lordships' Interlocutor—Legal Notes—and Speeches in giving judgment—The Law of the Land as to Dissenting Church property—The processes overruled for good for the Dissenting interest—State of the Relief Church—Its urgent claims upon the energetic and liberal support of all its members.—484—550.

## APPENDIX.

## I.

Reasons of the dissent, entered on the 15th of May, 1751, from the sentence of the General Assembly, censuring the Rev. members of the presbytery of Linlithgow, for not executing the sentences of former Assemblies, appointing them to ordain and admit Mr. James Watson, minister of the parish of Torphichen.—551.

## II.

Reasons of Dissent from the Judgment of the Commission resolving to inflict no censure on the Presbytery of Dunfermline for their disobedience in relation to the Settlement of Inverkeithing.—552.

## III.

Answers to the Reasons of Dissent from the Sentence of the Commission in the case of Inverkeithing, March 11, 1752; drawn up by the Committee appointed for that purpose, and dated May 16.—553.

## IV.

Resolutions of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, 22d May, 1736, upon the Report of their Commissioners sent to London, to endeavour the Repeal of the Act, 10mo Annæ, reimposing Patronages.—555.

## V.

List of Pamphlets occasioned by the Deposition of Gillespie.—557.

## VI.

A Compendious View of the Religious System maintained and taught by the Synod of Relief. By the Rev. Patrick Hutchison.—558.

## VII.

The Rev. Mr. Baine's Letter of Resignation.—568.

## VIII.


Dissenting Churches in Scotland in 1773, with the Names of their Ministers.—569.

## IX.

List of Controversial Pamphlets on the Relief Terms of Communion, as fixed by Synod 1473-4.—571.

## X.

Rev. Neil Douglas.—572.



# HISTORY

OF THE

## RELIEF CHURCH.

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### CHAPTER I.

THOMAS GILLESPIE — HIS PARENTAGE — CONVERSION AND  
EDUCATION FOR THE MINISTRY.

THE Reverend Thomas Gillespie, founder of the Relief church, was born in the year 1708, at Clearburn, in the parish of Duddingston, near Edinburgh. His father was a farmer and brewer. Thomas was the only child of a second marriage. An overruling providence saw meet to remove his father while yet he was a child, and a widowed mother was left to watch over the interests of her bereaved household. On her devolved his education and support. She continued to carry on the paternal business. Being a woman imbued with much sound discretion and sincerely religious, she was enabled to manage her domestic concerns with singular propriety. As there were children by a former marriage, she threw her fostering wing indiscriminately over her stepsons as well as her own boy, and by her truly motherly counsels and deportment, trained them all up to love each other. Ever afterwards they entertained a sincere affection towards her. During their whole life they continued on the most friendly terms, as if they had in all respects been the children of the same parents. Thomas, being the youngest, was tenderly nursed in the bosom of the domestic circle. A mother's heart, above that of all others, yearned with intense vehemence for the welfare of her fatherless boy, whom she solemnly felt herself bound to educate for meeting his father in a better world. In ordinary circumstances there is

a warmth and sincerity about a widow's instructions and prayers, which often cause a thoughtless boy both to think and feel, and she is also amazingly fertile in devising expedients for intellectual and religious improvement, if ordinary means prove ineffectual. These things were remarkably verified in the case of Mrs. Gillespie. Her assiduous training and maternal counsels threatened for a time to produce no salutary impression, but being devoutly persevered in, and discreetly adapted to her son's state of mind, they were eventually blessed in imparting to him a decided taste both for learning and religion.

Little, indeed, is known of the first years of Gillespie's life. The general fact is related on competent authority, that he showed no very early appearances of vital piety. This greatly distressed his mother, yet she did not despair of a saving change being wrought upon him. From the abundant resources of a mother's love, she had even recourse to authoritative and pointed means to impress his heart with the necessity of being born again, since her own advices and prayers seemed to fail in producing the desired effect. As soon as Thomas could understand a discourse, she diligently brought him under the awakening influence of a preached gospel. She fed her kid by the shepherds' tents. It was her yearly practice to go to those sacramental occasions in the south of Scotland, where she enjoyed the ministrations of such men as Wilson of Maxton, Boston of Ettrick, and Davidson of Galashiels, who then preached salvation by the cross of Christ with amazing power. On such occasions she carefully took her youthful son along with her, that he might be arrested and quickened by their evangelical doctrine and heart-stirring appeals. On one of those occasions she introduced Thomas, who was now fast sprouting into manhood, to the notice of Mr. Boston, and mentioned her extreme sorrow that he had hitherto remained callous and indifferent about his personal salvation. He was then nearly twenty years of age, addicted to no open vice, but without any visible or fixed determination as to his best interests. It was not possible to have applied to a better counsellor. Boston himself, as he relates in his memoirs, had not been brought under any deep religious concern about the state of his own soul, till he was twelve years of age; and, during that period, he had done things "which he ever afterwards looked upon as special blots upon his escutcheon." The watchful care which he had subsequently exercised over the movements of his heart, pecu-



liarly qualified him to speak an appropriate word to the young and thoughtless as well as to the erring and disconsolate Christian. Faithfully and affectionately did he converse and deal with the conscience of Gillespie, in the presence of his mother, concerning his eternal interests. His admonitions were signally blessed of God. A visible change almost immediately ensued in the young man's sentiments and behaviour. His mother had the unspeakable satisfaction of witnessing the success with which her efforts were crowned, and of rejoicing over her only son as a son of God. He now became deeply endeared to her, not only as a pledge of a father's love, but as a regenerated individual with whom, in her widowed state, she could take sweet counsel, both in temporal and spiritual matters.

From the period that Gillespie's heart was touched with a sense of religion, he turned his thoughts towards the Christian ministry, as a profession in which he might honour his Saviour, and labour for the good of men. Almost every young convert who is deeply impressed himself, and zealous that others should possess the blessedness which he enjoys, feels his mind more or less inclined to this sacred calling, though it is wisely ordered that the practical business of life should retain by far the greater bulk of genuine converts, and only a few should fill the office of the ministry. Comparatively speaking, only a very few are required. Gillespie was a chosen vessel. In his preparatory studies he was much retarded by the depressing views which he had of himself, and the sore inward temptations against which he was called to contend. A tinge of melancholy was early thrown over his religious character, arising from a tender conscience, and "the deceitful workings of Satan in the human heart." From the very commencement of his spiritual life he was thus disciplined by his Saviour into a thorough knowledge of the wiles of the wicked one, and of the shades and sunshine which succeed each other in the Christian's life. As all things work together for good to them who love God, this experimental knowledge of religion afterwards became the most striking and useful feature in his public ministrations. When the Lord seemed to be retarding his mere acquisition of Greek and Latin, he was carrying him through a course of deep religious training, of which the schools of human learning cannot even impart the elements, and yet without which the most polished and energetic addresses fall pointless upon the heart of an audience. From the workings of his own bosom he

learned in his closet and on his knees to speak home to the heart of others, and justly to consider Christianity, which is the religion of the heart, as a heart religion.

Ere Mr. Gillespie had finished his course of academic and theological education in the University of Edinburgh, his mother had separated from the Church of Scotland, and connected herself with the Church of the Secession. She heartily sympathized with the Erskines and their coadjutors in their strenuous advocacy of the doctrines of the Reformation, and "took up the testimony" of those who were endeavouring, in the midst of much obloquy and worldly sacrifices, to stem the tide of error and relaxed discipline which was threatening to deluge the church of Christ. By her advice, he, in the last year of his theological course, withdrew from the Divinity Hall of Edinburgh, and went and enrolled himself a student of Divinity under the Rev. Mr. Wilson of Perth, who had lately been appointed professor of theology among the Seceders. But while he was dutiful to his mother he was also faithful to his God. Much as he revered her, he considered he was bound in religious matters to judge for himself. He would call no one on earth master, save Christ, who alone is Lord of the conscience. After he had entered the Secession Hall, and "conversed with the professor, and understood on what plan of principles they were going,"\* he was dissatisfied with their views, and in the course of ten days thereafter voluntarily left it. This was a very decided step. It showed great intrepidity of character. Few young men, from a scruple of conscience, at the commencement of their theological career, would have ventured to do what he had done. He had openly left the Established church, and also the Secession, and now what was to become of him, or with whom was he to unite? To all human appearance his path was now blocked up.

The place to which he resorted to finish his divinity studies, throws a flood of light both on his character and on the principles by which he was actuated. "He went to England with full attestations of his piety, prudent and exemplary deportment, progress in philosophical and theological literature, and spiritual gifts, from the Rev. Messrs. Davidson, Galashiels, Wilson of Maxston, Wardlaw of Dunfermline, Smith of Newburn, Guthart, Webster, and Hepburn, of Edinburgh, James Walker of Can-

\* Scots Magazine, vol. xxxvi., p. 272.

nongate, M<sup>r</sup> Vicar of West Kirk, Kid of Queensferry, Bonar of Torphichen, and Wardrope of Whitburn, all of whom mention their having been intimately acquainted with him.”\* The academy to which he resorted in England, was that of the celebrated Dr. Doddridge, Northampton, where he finished his theological course.

The particular reason which made him dissatisfied with the views of the Secession, can only be inferentially discovered, as it is not stated in any of the short memoirs which have been left of him. He certainly could take no offence at their theological views, for he was himself a strict Calvinist, and a great advocate for what at that time was colloquially designated “Marrow Doctrine,” and to which also the first Seceders were sincerely attached. Nor could it be from any dislike of their views about the rights of the Christian people to elect their own office-bearers, for he also was strenuously opposed to the exercise of patronage, and the intrusion of ministers upon reclaiming parishes. The points in “the plan of principles” of the Secession, which are generally understood to have given dissatisfaction to Gillespie, were those restricted terms of communion, which were now beginning to find favour in their eyes, and the great stress which they were now laying upon covenanting as the bulwark and security of the church. It is expressly said that it was “the *plan* of their principles” which gave him offence; and this evidently refers to the mode in which they were binding them upon their adherents, and carrying them into effect. His betaking himself to the academy of Dr. Doddridge, shows the estimation in which he held the liberal and tolerant opinions of that distinguished non-conformist, whilst the persons that signed his testimonials, and who were all on the liberal and orthodox side of the Church of Scotland, bear ample evidence to the theological sentiments he was accustomed to cherish. It was evidently with those who were struggling against the corruptions of the church that he delighted to associate. As straws show the direction of the current, so these little matters are signs of the early bent of Gillespie’s mind, and indications that he was likely in after life to be the friend of truth, and the foe of all stringent measures in the house of God. He had in him the elements of unshrinking firmness in religious matters; and when the time did come he showed

\* Gillespie on Temptation, Preface, p. 3.

that he could brave the tyrannical authority of the Church of Scotland, as well as the narrow views of the early Seceders, if they clashed with what he believed in his conscience to be the sacred truths of the Bible. His rupture with the Secession, which has not been sufficiently attended to by his biographers, serves mainly to account for the coldness which he continued to retain towards them, when afterwards he had strong inducements to cultivate their friendship. A wound may be healed, yet still the scar will remain.

Having been received into the academy of Dr. Doddridge, on the recommendation of the most distinguished ministers in Scotland, who were personally acquainted with him, and who had full confidence in his talents, learning, and piety, he speedily secured also the esteem of his new teacher. His theological studies being completed, he was licensed, after the usual trials, to preach the gospel on 30th October, 1740, being then thirty-two years of age. As the greater part of this time had been spent in study, and in making preparation for the work of the ministry, his mind must have been well stored for the discharge of its important and onerous duties. He was ordained, not over any particular congregation, but to the pastoral office at large, on the 22d January, 1741, by a number of dissenting ministers, Dr. Doddridge acting as moderator. March following, he left England with warm and ample recommendations from Doddridge, Job Orton, and other thirteen ministers in the neighbourhood of Northampton, "as a deeply experienced Christian, well qualified for the important work of the ministry, and one who bade fair to prove an ornament to his holy profession, and an instrument of considerable usefulness to the souls of men." Dr. Doddridge afterwards kept up a regular correspondence with him, and esteemed him very highly for his work's sake.

## CHAPTER II.

### GILLESPIE'S ADMISSION INTO CONNECTION WITH THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND.

WHEN Gillespie returned to Scotland in the spring of 1741, he again connected himself with the Established Church. Immediately thereafter, he received a presentation from Colonel Erskine of Carnock to the parish of Carnock, which was then vacant; and afterwards he got a regular call from the parish and congregation. He produced the *deed* of his ordination by Dr. Doddridge and other dissenting ministers in England to the presbytery of Dunfermline, who sustained it; and on the 19th of August, he “judicially” accepted of the call, and was, thereupon, introduced into his charge. “The Church of Scotland was not so sectarian then as she afterwards became. Her pulpits were not shut against good men coming from sister churches, and she cordially gave the right hand of fellowship to those who approved in general of her polity, and were sound in the essentials of the Christian faith, even though, like the nonconformists of England, they could not embrace every lesser matter embodied in her standards and regulations. It was the device of the men of an after age to abridge her broad and comprehensive platform, and to make themselves a mere sect by introducing and acting upon sectarian distinctions.

The parish of Carnock, to the pastorate of which Mr. Gillespie was ordained, is situated in the county of Fife, about four miles west of Dunfermline. It is of small extent, and mostly inhabited by a rural population. At the time of his settlement its inhabitants were about 600. It had been favoured by enjoying the ministry of some excellent individuals, particularly that of the Rev. James Hogg, who died in 1734, after having laboured in it for thirty-five years with great zeal and fidelity, leaving a name behind him which is still fragrant in the annals of the Church of Scotland. Its inhabitants were, therefore, well instructed in



the doctrines of the Reformation, and were peculiarly qualified to relish the bold and heart-searching preaching of Mr. Gillespie.\*

There were two things connected with his appointment to the parish which are peculiarly deserving of notice:—The one of which does not seem to reflect much credit on Mr. Gillespie, while the other is greatly to his honour. He did not preach at Carnock before the presbytery moderated his call; and on this account, Colonel Hacket, one of the parishioners, objected to its moderation. This is scarcely what might have been expected from him, considering his high regard for the liberties of the Christian people. At the same time, he could not preach there without the appointment of presbytery; and as many of the people had heard him elsewhere, and concurred in his call, the opposition was ultimately fallen from, and he was placed with the unanimous *consent of the presbytery and parish*.

The other fact, which is honourable to Mr. Gillespie, brings out, in a very distinct manner, both his clear views of the nature of the kingdom of Christ, and his conscientious adherence to his convictions of what he esteemed to be the doctrine of scripture. When the call from Carnock was put into his hand, and he was required to sign the Confession of Faith before he could accept of it, he did it with an explanation or objection to its doctrine respecting the power of the civil magistrate in religion. The presbytery accepted of his qualified subscription, and his admission to the parish took place accordingly. This fact has, of late, excited considerable discussion, and some keen churchmen, who imagine that the views of the present day, as to the Divine right of religious establishments, are those of 1741, would very fondly deny it altogether; but the evidence in its support is ample and conclusive. The Rev. Dr. John Erskine, Edinburgh, grandson

\* It is remarkable that three of the ministers of Carnock were deposed or ejected, and yet none of them for any alleged immorality, but all of them for what may be charitably supposed to have been with them *matters of conscience*. One was ejected by Archbishop Sharp in 1662, for refusing to acknowledge the episcopal form of church-government and worship;—another, after the Revolution, fell a martyr to Episcopacy by suffering deprivation for not acknowledging King William and Queen Mary;—and a third in the present century was solemnly deposed by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, for not bearing a part in a violent settlement to which he had been enjoined by the authority of that court. This was the famous THOMAS GILLESPIE, afterwards founder of the PRESBYTERY OF RELIEF, whose case has long been, and still is, reckoned by some a singular instance of Presbyterian persecution.—*Statistical Account of Carnock by the Rev. Mr. Thomson, 1794.*

of Colonel Erskine, patron of Carnock, and the intimate friend of Mr. Gillespie, and who had, at the time, all his papers in his possession, published a short memoir of him after his death in 1774, which he prefixed to a posthumous "treatise by Gillespie on Temptation," in which he says, "Before he was admitted he subscribed the Confession of Faith, and Formula, with a single explanation respecting the power of the civil magistrate." Dr. Erskine had been a member, when a student, of Mr. Gillespie's congregation; and, considering the intimacy which subsisted between them, he could not be mistaken.

In a petition which some of Mr. Gillespie's congregation presented after his death to the General Assembly, 1774, to have his church converted into a chapel-of-ease, and received within the bosom of the Establishment, they expressly state, before he was admitted to Carnock, "he subscribed the formula with a single explanation, respecting the power of the magistrate. In no other instance did he deviate in the least from the whole forms of the church." The portion of his congregation that gave in this petition were inclined to the Establishment, and being at the time warmly opposed by a still more numerous party, who were in favour of the Relief, they would never have stated a circumstance which tended to militate against the very object of their petition, had not the fact been notorious, and required the softening explanation which they have attempted to give it. Dr. Stewart, the son-in-law of the Rev. Dr. John Erskine, and who got into his possession the papers of Gillespie, published in the *Quarterly Magazine*, 1798,—“An account of the late Thomas Gillespie,”—in which he says explicitly, “At his admission to this parish, [Carnock,] he objected to the doctrine of the Confession of Faith respecting the power of the civil magistrate in religion, but was permitted to subscribe with an explanation of his meaning.” He adds, “What that explanation was, the writer of this has not been able to learn. It is not, however, to be doubted, but that, like many other excellent men, he acted in this subscription, with conscious uprightness, for the tenor of his conduct through life, both as a man and a minister, showed inflexible sincerity and readiness to sacrifice his worldly interests to the dictates of his conscience.” The fact, on these three distinct sources of evidence, may therefore be held as established; that Gillespie did object to the power of the civil magistrate in religion, as laid down in the Westminster Confession.



Dr. Erskine acknowledges that there were accusations raised against him as being secretly of Congregational principles, and an enemy to Presbyterian church government. The records of the presbytery bear this on their face. The second objection of Colonel Halket leaves no doubt on the point. “*Secundo*, The Colonel is informed that Mr. Gillespie is neither licensed nor ordained by the Church of Scotland, and that he is not of fixed principles nor of the communion of this church, and that he has actually refused to sign the Confession of Faith, and so cannot be lected or voted for, conform to law, both civil and ecclesiastical.” A member of presbytery was deputed to wait upon the Colonel, and to assure him that the objections made against Mr. Gillespie “were founded upon misinformation.” The matter was, in some way or other, got over; for the minutes bear “that Mr. Gillespie was called in, and having declared his adherence to the doctrine, worship, and government of this church, and *judicially* signed the Confession of Faith and formula, the moderator put the call from Carnock into his hands, which he judicially accepted of, upon which Mr. Wardlaw, in name of the heritors, asked and took instruments.” This, however, determines nothing. It is mere negative evidence against positive declarations. In none of the accounts is it said that Mr. Gillespie put his explanation on record; and if it was merely given verbally, and was satisfactory to the court, they would never think of engrossing it. The common mode of signing the Confession of Faith, at that period, was in a very general way, and the subscriber was not understood to be bound by every iota which the Confession contained.\* He signed it “judicially,” or according to the judgment of court, and this, as will yet appear, left ample room for the exercise of private judgment, in opposition to the judicatories of the church.

\* As illustrations of the mode in which the Church of Scotland allowed persons to subscribe the Confession, the following are instances:—

When the Rev. Mr. Wardlaw was admitted minister of Dunfermline, 1718, he signed the Confession with an explanation regarding the extent of the death of Christ.—*Fraser’s Life of Ralph Erskine*, p. 108.

A young man in passing his trials in the presbytery of Irvine, (at a period somewhat later,) when he came to sign the Formula, told the presbytery that his subscription was not to be understood as an assent to every thing contained in the Confession, for all that he meant was no more than a general assent as to the substance of it, or something to that purpose, but without specifying any proposition that he denied or doubted. To this explanation of his subscription several members objected. I confess I was one of those who pleaded and prevailed for admitting it in his own sense.—*Walker’s Vindication of the Church of Scotland*, p. 113.

In the Memoir already referred to, Dr. Erskine anxiously defends both Mr. Gillespie in giving, and the presbytery in receiving his explanation, from the charge of dishonesty. "If he had indeed offered, and if the presbytery of Dunfermline had accepted, a subscription of articles of faith, with explanations and limitations that destroyed the plain and obvious sense of these articles, I could not have much admired his honesty in fraudulently acquiring the benefits of an Establishment from which he was excluded by the fundamental law of the constitution; or the modesty of an inferior church court in exerting a dispensing power with respect to such fundamental laws, which even the General Assembly in her judicative capacity could not possibly have exerted. However, I know no evidence for such a charge, and the gentlemen who chiefly promoted his settlement discovered through the whole of his life, and even in the most dangerous times, so firm an attachment to the doctrine, worship, and government of the Church of Scotland, that I cannot believe without evidence, they would have sacrificed these to private friendship for Mr. Gillespie or any man."\*

This is very good apologetic reasoning on behalf of both parties; but it ought to be remembered, that by diminishing the objection of Mr. Gillespie "respecting the power of the civil magistrate" to the merest shadow of verbal discrepancy, his honesty is thereby compromised. He was taught, licensed, and ordained by Dr. Doddridge, and laid the deed of his ordination by the English Dissenters on the presbytery table, and on this he was accepted, without renouncing any of his former opinions. It requires only a simple comparison of the doctrine of Dr. Doddridge and of the Westminster Assembly on the power of the civil magistrate in religion, to perceive that there is a great discrepancy between them, and that no man can be ordained in the one, and then subscribe the other, without giving an explanation of his conduct. Honesty on the part of Mr. Gillespie imperatively required it. The Confession enacts in stringent terms: "Because the *powers* which God hath ordained, and the liberty which Christ hath purchased, are not intended by God to destroy, but mutually to uphold and preserve one another, they who *upon pretence of Christian liberty* shall *oppose* any lawful power, or the exercise of it, whether it be civil or ecclesiastical, resist the ordinance of

\* Preface to Essay on Temptation, p. 4.

God, and for their *publishing* of such *opinions*, or maintaining of such practices as are *contrary to the light of nature*, or to the *known principles of Christianity*, whether concerning *faith, worship, or conversation*; or to the power of godliness, or such *erroneous opinions* or practices as either in their own nature or in the manner of publishing them, are destructive to the external peace and order which Christ has established in the church, they may lawfully be called to account, and proceeded against by the censures of the church, and BY THE POWER OF THE CIVIL MAGISTRATE.”\* In the Larger Catechism one of the sins forbidden in the Second Commandment is—“*tolerating* a false religion.” On the other hand, Doddridge taught—“that the civil magistrate should not so interpose in matters of religion or rites of worship as to *inflict any penalties* on his subjects on account of them, so long as nothing is done prejudicial to the peace of the community.” In demonstrating this proposition he lays down the following axioms:—“1. There are a variety of religions in the world which are so inconsistent, that it is impossible they should all be true. 2. If it be the duty of the magistrate to *establish* and *defend* ANY religion by *penalties*, he must establish and defend that which he takes to be true. 3. There is reason to believe that the generality of men take their own religion to be true. 4. Many magistrates in the world, and perhaps the greatest part of them, would be obliged (if the contrary of the proposition were true) to persecute truth and establish falsehood.”† The Doctor was for preventing the spread of erroneous opinions by “rational debate without having recourse to violence”—“which only made hypocrites.” As Gillespie had been indoctrinated into these opinions at Northampton, and afterwards ordained by those who held them; and as his English credentials were sustained by the Dunfermline presbytery, it was not possible that he, as an honest man, could subscribe the standards of the Church of Scotland, without declaring how he understood their persecuting clauses. It is a matter, indeed, of very grave consideration how any man can sign the Confession without making a distinct declaration against its clearly expressed, compulsory, and persecuting principles. It dips the sword of the magistrate, for conscience’ sake, in blood. The wonder is not that Gillespie should have shrunk from adopting its persecuting

\* Chap. xx. § 4.

† Part III., Lect. 87.

tenets, when he was called upon solemnly to append his name to its pages, but that every member of the courts of the Establishment should not do the same.

The year in which Mr. Gillespie was inducted into the parish of Carnock was remarkable in the religious history of Scotland, and he was soon thrown into the very focus of excitement and discussion. Whitefield, on 30th July, 1741, paid his first visit to Scotland. A correspondence had been opened up between him and the Erskines. They had invited him to come and help them in carrying on the work of the reformation. Whitefield had promised to come "and sit at their feet, and learn the way of God more perfectly." When he arrived in Edinburgh, he was earnestly entreated by Dr. Webster and a number of persons of the very first distinction in the city, to preach in some of the pulpits of the Establishment. He was quite inexorable. He only tarried an hour in Leith, and set out for Dunfermline. He thus showed great honesty of purpose, and a high degree of honourable feeling, considering his burning zeal for preaching the gospel, and the thousands who were waiting on tiptoe expectation to hear him. "I determined," he says in one of his letters, "to give the Erskines the first offer of my poor services, as they gave me the first invitation to Scotland." Ralph was sensible of the firmness which Whitefield displayed in resisting the strong inducements which he had met with to falter in his purpose; and, therefore, in his own energetic and graphic way, he acknowledges "he came to me over the belly of vast opposition." In Dunfermline, Whitefield received a very cordial greeting. He was at once received into Ralph's pulpit in the meeting-house which had been erected for him, and in which he preached to his adherents when it was not his turn to preach in the parish church, where he still alternately officiated with Wardlaw, his colleague. Mr. Erskine was well pleased with the preacher and sermon. Whitefield was equally gratified with the immense multitude that hung upon his lips, and the rustling of a host of bibles which all at once met his ears when he gave out his text. "Such a scene he had never been witness to before." But this was only the commencement of their communings. The day which dawned so auspiciously was soon overcast with clouds. Whitefield returned on the evening of the 31st July, to Edinburgh, contrary to the earnest wishes of the Seceders, and Ralph accompanied him, and even went with him to the pulpit of the Canongate parish church.



A meeting of the Secession presbytery was to be held on Wednesday, the 5th August, to settle and arrange the terms on which Whitefield should be associated with them, and they both returned together to Dunfermline. Ralph, in the meantime, had kindly endeavoured to pave the way for his reception, by writing explanatory letters to his brother Ebenezer, in Stirling, and also to others, about his harmonizing with them to a great extent in their principles. Whitefield was much struck with the grave and venerable appearance of the Seceding ministers, but his visit to Edinburgh, and his immense audiences there, had cooled his willingness "to sit at the feet" of the Secession presbytery. Ralph says, "he now came harnessed for the discussion." After a long and somewhat angry debate on the Presbyterian form of church government, the covenants, and the terms of ministerial and Christian communion, a grievous disruption took place. They parted from each other with chafed and fretted tempers, never, alas! in this world, to have any more friendly ministerial intercourse. Whitefield declared, that "settling church government and preaching about the solemn league and covenant was not his plan." His great object was to rouse a sleeping world, dead in trespasses and sins, and bring them to Jesus. "I am verily persuaded," said he, "there is no such form of church government prescribed in the word of God as excludes a toleration of all other forms whatsoever. Were the Associate Presbytery's scheme to take effect, they must, out of conscience, if they acted consistently, restrain and grieve, if not persecute, many of God's children who could not come up to their measures." He adhered also to his episcopal ordination, and was resolved to preach in all churches the gospel of Christ, and to hold communion with all who held the essentials of Christianity. The Seceders, on the other hand, had now been deposed by the Establishment; their minds were jaundiced and grieved by seeing many ministers who had once cheered them on, now deserting what they conscientiously considered the cause of truth, and basely chiming in as changelings with the prevailing party in the church. A covenanted reformation was at that time the idol of Scotland. The Seceders saw in it a strong bond of union; they approved of its doctrinal principles, and were resolved, if possible, to unite all Christians in one uniform profession of faith, and, by the strictest discipline, and the sanctions of civil law, if these could be obtained, to transmit the gospel pure and entire from age to age. Such a

plan, universally acted upon, would have seriously trenched on liberty of conscience; and yet, not only the Seceders, but all the leading men of the day, testified against active toleration as a sin contrary to the word of God and the covenants. Prelacy, in particular, on account of its recent persecutions of Presbytery, was in exceeding bad odour. The strict Presbyterians could not tolerate a single rag of its vestments. It would have been on the part of the Seceders a glaring infraction of the solemn league made with England for its extirpation, to have symbolized with Whitefield holding ordination from a bishop, unless he had either renounced it, or declared himself dissatisfied therewith. In these circumstances, and holding these opinions, it was not possible that they could wink at any one, however eminent, sitting in their church courts who still wished to retain his connections with the prelatic church of England. This was the point on which the discussion mainly hinged. "I asked them seriously," says Whitefield, "what they would have me to do? The answer was, that I was not desired to subscribe immediately to the solemn league and covenant, but to preach only for them till I had further light. I asked, Why only for them? Mr. Ralph Erskine said, 'They were the Lord's people.' I then asked whether there were no other Lord's people but themselves? and supposing all others were the devil's people, they certainly had more need to be preached to, and therefore I was more and more determined to go out into the highways and hedges; and that if the pope himself would lend me his pulpit, I would gladly proclaim the righteousness of Jesus Christ therein. Soon after this, the company broke up, and one of these, otherwise venerable men, immediately went into the meeting-house, and preached upon these words: "Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will inquire, inquire ye; return, come.' I attended; but the good man so spent himself in the former part of his sermon, in talking against prelacy, the common prayer-book, the surplice, the rose in the hat, and such like externals, that when he came to the latter part of his text, to invite poor sinners to Jesus Christ, his breath was so gone, that he could scarce be heard. What a pity that the last was not first, and the first last! The consequence of all this was an open breach. I retired, I wept, I prayed, and after preaching in the fields, sat down and dined with them, and then took a

final leave. Lord, what is man, what the best of men, but men at the best? I think I have now seen an end of all perfection."

The account given by Dr. Jamieson of this unfortunate interview is not materially different, and confirms the general persuasion, that while there was much honesty of purpose, there was also by far too little forbearance. Religious liberty had not made the progress then which it has since done. Heresy had been regarded for centuries as a crime which should "be punished by the judges;" and it would have been a miracle if men brought up under such a system of ecclesiastical polity, had all at once emancipated themselves from its thralldom. "Sometime after Mr. Whitefield's coming to Scotland, the presbytery, or members of it, had a conversation with him. It is likely enough that the solemn league might be mentioned in this conversation. But it has still been understood that the direct and principal reason of difference was about church government. On this head an anecdote is commonly told, of the truth of which there seems to be no reason to doubt. After a good deal of reasoning as to a particular form of church government being prescribed in scripture, Mr. Whitefield, laying his hand on his heart, said, 'I do not find it here.' Mr. Alexander Moncrieff, who was of a warm temper, giving a rap on the Bible, which was lying on the table, replied, 'But I find it here.' On this, if I mistake not, the conversation terminated; and it has still been asserted that the proper ground of their giving up any connection with Mr. Whitefield was his positive denial that any particular form of church government was of divine authority, and declaring his resolution to maintain this in his public ministrations."\*

Whitefield escaped from the Secession presbytery, and the binding obligation of the Scotch covenants, with all possible speed, and returned to Edinburgh, where the issue of his negotiation with the Seceders was waited for with deep anxiety. He was received by the popular party of the Establishment with open arms, and welcomed into their pulpits without any inquiries or fastidiousness about his Episcopal leanings. The very churchmen who had once been the bosom friends of the Erskines, now plumed themselves upon their gain. They triumphed over them. The commanding eloquence of Whitefield drew immense crowds again to the parish churches where he officiated, and the stream

\* Remarks on the Rev. Rowland Hill's Journal, by John Jamieson, D.D., p. 39.



of a floating population seeking excitement, and a warm application of the truths of the gospel, was for a season completely turned away from the tents of the Seceders. They were great men, but not so great as Whitefield, and they were by this time destitute of the irresistible charm of novelty. Bisset of Aberdeen, a minister of the Establishment and one of the stricter sort, openly charged his brethren, in a letter which he published, with showing favour to the Episcopalian, Whitefield, with the intent of weakening the Secession, and blamed them openly for gross inconsistency. "I am heartily sorry for the narrow way of thinking, and unaccountable way of doing, that is with some of the worthy ministers of the Secession, who forbid communion with such ministers as are not one whit behind themselves, in witnessing against prevailing evils, and the defections of the Church of Scotland; but I never expected that some ministers and elders, because of their extremes, would have given up with all their former contendings, and have invited, employed, and caressed, a subverter of our government, as it would seem, for this end, to break the Seceders." For some weeks he preached in Edinburgh twice or thrice every day in the churches and in the public park, where a forest of human beings were weeping or rejoicing according to the varying strain of the preacher, who had the sympathies of his immense auditory at will. He obtained £500 for his American orphans, in goods and money. A sum truly astonishing, when it is borne in mind that Scotland was a very poor country, and poorer then than ordinary, because it was sorely pinched from a scarcity of food almost approaching to famine, and on account of which the General Assembly had appointed a national fast to deprecate the wrath of an offended God.

Though Gillespie was not an actor in any of these scenes, he was a spectator, and many things contributed to give him an interest in them; so that it is not to be wondered at that he was afterwards deeply interested in the revival produced by Whitefield, and insensibly took a deep colouring from passing events. He came from England a short time before Whitefield, where the catholic views of this universal evangelist were well known and much appreciated. He was on the very spot at the time when the rupture took place between Whitefield and the Seceders. Whitefield met with the Secession presbytery on the 5th of August at Dunfermline; and on the 19th of the same

month, and at the same place, Gillespie, at a meeting of the Established presbytery, accepted of his call to the parish of Carnock, at which meeting also he made his exception to the power of the civil magistrate in religious matters. This was one of the very points with which the whole countryside at the moment was agitated; and as the Seceders had been thwarted by the famous Whitefield, the Established presbytery might not be backward to keep the subject alive. They had a particular grudge at Ralph Erskine, for in spite of the sentence of deposition he still retained his church; and it was not till next year that the Assembly called in the aid of the civil power to "*debar*" him from entering the pulpit of his former parish, and compelled him to give access to the ministers of the Establishment. In the midst of these tumultuous and extraordinary scenes and proceedings, Gillespie was presented, called, and ordained at Carnock, which was in the immediate neighbourhood of Dunfermline. All these things would naturally contribute both to confirm him in his liberal views, and, at the same time, widen that breach which, two years before, had also taken place between him and the Seceders "on the plan of their principles." External circumstances, to an extraordinary degree, modify and mould the mind of man.

The religious state of Scotland at this period within the pale of the Establishment, was far from being healthy. Public favour was with the Seceders. They were considered as the salt of the earth. They had the charm of suffering for a good conscience, and the interests of evangelical religion. The people blamed the popular party in the Establishment for deserting them in their time of need. Many refused to attend ordinances in their parish churches. There was within them a cold atmosphere arising from distrust between the pulpit and the pew. Religion was like to die in the land. Speaking of this period, Robe, in his 'Narrative of the Work of the Spirit at Kilsyth,' says, "When our unhappy divisions broke out, only about ten or twelve deserted my ministry. They were of no consideration as to serious religion, nor even knowledge, except one who some time since saw his error, and returned. Yet, though the body of the people were not carried away by this evil, they were so bewitched as to incline to the separating side, and were so taken up with disputable things, that little concern about those of the greatest importance could be observed among them. All the societies for

*prayer were then given up.*" The accession of Whitefield, therefore, to the Established church, who was so sound in the faith, so fervent in zeal, so unwearied in diligence; so simple, so meek, so affectionate, and so successful in winning souls to Christ, was to her like life from the dead. He not only gave the first impulse, but carried on also the revivals, which appeared soon afterwards in various districts of Scotland.

After Whitefield, in the close of the summer, left Scotland, various means were adopted to keep alive and fan the flame which he had kindled. The conversion of the soul to God became the subject of common conversation in the metropolis. Accounts of conversions were printed, circulated, and read from the pulpits. A weekly periodical was commenced in Glasgow, under the auspices of Mr. M'Culloch, on the 1st of December, "giving an account of the most remarkable particulars relating to the present progress of the gospel." It was said on the title-page to be by "the encouragement of the Rev. Mr. Whitefield," and it was confined mainly to his operations. Ministers began to preach on regeneration, and to address themselves pointedly to the conscience of their hearers. Prayer-meetings were revived, and new ones, called concerts for prayer, were established. Mr. M'Culloch, in a letter to Mr. Whitefield,\* states that his labours in Glasgow had been crowned with remarkable success. Fifty persons were judged to have been savingly converted by the power and blessing of God accompanying the sermons he had preached. These were carefully searched out. Several of them were young persons. They outstripped other Christians of older standing in spiritual-mindedness; were exceedingly zealous for the conversion of others; and by their exhortations and letters, endeavoured to excite their relations and friends to a concern about their salvation. They had all a great love for each other. During the winter and spring, a considerable stir in several localities took place. This was particularly the case in Cambuslang and Kilsyth, two parishes in the neighbourhood of Glasgow. A person of the name of Ingram More, residing in Cambuslang, was one of those who had come under serious impressions at Glasgow in the preceding summer; and, like his fellow-converts, he was earnest to awaken others from the sleep of spiritual death. He influenced a considerable number to join him in a petition to the Rev. Mr.

\* Weekly History, No. 13.

M'Culloch, to establish in the parish a weekly lecture for prayer and Christian fellowship. This was the first decided symptom of a revival which appeared, and for the coming of which Mr. M'Culloch had been preaching and publishing with great zeal, and earnestly praying in faith ever since Whitefield had set the example. The spark was really struck by the evangelist of the south, and one of his own converts nursed it into a flame. Much credit, however, is due to Mr. M'Culloch, who was a truly pious and laborious minister, and who was blessed with an awakening in his parish, which is still without a parallel in the annals of Scotland since the period of the Reformation. "All night in the fields might be heard the sound of praying and praise."

A similar awakening took place about the same time in Kilsyth. The Rev. Mr. Robe had also been preaching on regeneration to his people for more than a twelvemonth, and pressing them very closely with its necessity and importance. A more than ordinary seriousness began in the spring of 1742 to appear among them. The news of the outpouring of the Spirit at Cambuslang, and the visits both of Mr. Robe and of several of his people to the scene of excitement, soon led to a similar burst of sanctified feeling among themselves. Individual cases of awakening first occurred like the drops before the shower; but on the 16th of May, while he was pressing all the unregenerate to seek to have Christ formed in them, an extraordinary power from on high accompanied his exhortations. The Spirit seemed to rest upon his auditory. There was a great mourning among them as for an only son. Many cried out. Some of them were women, and others of them were strong and stout-hearted young men. When Mr. Robe essayed to speak to them he could not be heard, such were their bitter cries and groans, and the voice of their weeping. The noise of their distress was so great, that it was heard from afar. Some of them were crying out for mercy; some that they were lost and undone; others, what shall we do to be saved? others praising God for their being awakened; and others not only weeping and crying out for themselves, but also for their graceless relations. Trembling took hold of the people. It extended to other congregations and parishes; and the whole of the west of Scotland was like a country prepared of the Lord.

Whitefield having spent his winter in Moorfields, London, hastened down to Scotland, and speedily appeared at the *Pente-*



cost in Cambuslang and Kilsyth. He was in his very element amid broken hearts. Streaming eyes which unnerve many a timid speaker, only imparted fire to his burning eloquence. He was always great; but he was unspeakably more so when the people fell before him like grass before the scythe of the mower. Being invited to assist Mr. M'Culloch at the dispensation of his sacrament on the 11th of July, he gladly accepted of the invitation; and at two successive sacraments lifted up his thrilling voice in the sweet dell formed by the hand of nature for holy eloquence. "On Saturday," says he, "I preached to above twenty thousand people. In my prayer the power of God came down, and was greatly felt. In my two sermons there was yet more power. On the Sabbath scarce was ever such a sight seen in Scotland. There were undoubtedly upwards of twenty thousand people. A *brae* or hill near the manse of Cambuslang seemed formed by Providence for containing a large congregation. Two tents were set up, and the holy sacrament was administered in the fields. The communion-table was in the field. Many ministers attended to preach and report, all enlivening, and enlivened by one another."\*

From Cambuslang he went straight to Kilsyth, where the sacrament was to be dispensed, and where there were also a wounded people awaiting the healing power of his gospel message. Here the same scenes were renewed as at Cambuslang, only the crowds were not so great, though the feeling was equally intense. The same class of people attended at both; and little children and hoary sinners, and persons who came to observe the faintings, and inwardly laugh at the whole scene, fell under the power of the gospel. Strong, courageous, and stout-hearted spirits, as well as timorous and weak-minded ones, were subdued to Christ in the day of his power; and after passing through a longer or shorter period of sharp, pungent grief for sin, gradually obtained a steady view of a suffering Saviour, laid down their sorrows at the foot of his cross, and attained eventually to peace and joy. Churches all around were filled with attentive hearers; a pleasing reformation of manners ensued; and though a considerable number, after sharp convictions, returned to the world, not a few walked softly all the days of their life, and died full of faith and good works.

\* Letters.



In this remarkable awakening there were many things to be blamed. The calm observer could perceive great extravagancies over which that charity which hopeth all things, required to cast the ample folds of her mantle. The Seceders, who were contending against the Established church for her corruptions and declensions, and who the year before had quarrelled with Whitefield, were neither in a position nor humour to judge favourably of this revival which was now absorbing public attention, and drawing thousands around its tents. They met at Dunfermline on the 15th July, and condemned it in no measured terms, and appointed the 4th of August to be observed as a day of fasting and humiliation, on account of the delusion which was then going on. In their "Declaration" which they published, they do not only speak disparagingly of Whitefield, and condemn him as a prelatist, but they also accuse the Established ministers of giving him countenance and trumpeting his conversions for the purpose of regaining their popularity with the people. "We blush and are ashamed," say they, "at the base degeneracy of the present lukewarm Laodicean ministers, and professors of this Erastian church, whose ways are such as may astonish the heavens, and make them horribly afraid, and very desolate, because they have forsaken the Lord the fountain of living water, his true covenanted cause, truth and ways; and have hewn out to themselves broken cisterns that can hold no water; in walking after the imagination of their own hearts, and gadding about to change their ways, by going in the way of Egypt and Assyria, to drink the waters of Sihor and the river, even the poisonable puddles of prelacy and sectarianism, from which it seems they will never be reclaimed, till the Lord in his just displeasure make their own wickedness to correct them, and their backsliding to reprove them in some discernible way; Jer. ii. 12, 13, 18, 19. Ah! how sad and lamentable is it to hear tell of the carriage and conduct of men, who call themselves Presbyterian ministers, who should be a good example to others, especially to those whom they profess to have the pastoral charge of, falling into such an extreme degree of dangerous apostacy, and backsliding from the covenanted God of Scotland, and all his covenanted ways, as to call, invite, and join in full communion in word and sacrament with Mr. George Whitefield, an abjured prelatist hireling of as lax toleration principles, as any that ever set up for the advancing of the kingdom of Satan, and teaching their parishioners by their black example to fall into

the same excess of backsliding and departing from the Lord. Oh! how base and contemptible hath the Lord in his justice made them before all the people; for the wrongs they have done to him, his glory, cause, interest, and people now, when they are calling, inviting, and almost as highly esteeming, this wandering star Whitefield, who steers his course according to the compass of gain and advantage, and his vain glorious orations, as these brutish people did proud Herod, who gave the shout and said, ‘It is the voice of God, and not of man,’ Acts xii. 21, 22. And that because he with his enthusiastic-like raptures, and deluded experiences, multiplies their congregations, and regains their lost credit among their own hearers.” . . . “Upon these and many other weighty grounds and reasons that might be given against him, we do for ourselves, and for all others who shall adhere to us in this, by these presents expressly protest, testify, and declare against George Whitefield, his coming to Scotland, as an emissary of Satan, and harbinger of antichrist, to defile the inhabitants of this land, by his pernicious sectarian doctrines, and to draw them a further degree from the obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ, to follow him in his dangerous courses of apostacy, backsliding, defection, and delusion; and to give them such an unhappy impression upon their minds concerning the indifferency of all religions, and the large extent of Christian and church communion, with almost all heretics, that so they may be disposed to embrace popery, or any other error, that may be proposed to them.” . . . “Moreover, we do also judge it to be our duty to bear witness and testimony against all the evil consequences, that have already followed or may hereafter follow, upon the fond reception and encouragement that Whitefield hath met with in this land; particularly against the so much magnified work at Cambuslang, and other places; which we are persuaded, is nothing but a mere delusion of Satan; and not a saving work of conversion: because it is not agreeable to the way of God’s gracious working in converting his people, manifested to the world in his holy word, which is our only rule.” . . . “The work itself in all the circumstances of it, as pantings, breathings, convulsions, cryings, &c. The removal of these distempers, their joys, and comforts, and high attainments to pray and exhort publicly, &c., comes all with such visible observation, and is so discernible to their fellow creatures; that the managers thereof, as if they had usurped Jehovah’s prerogative, to understand heart

secrets, and to know the certainty of the saving work of conversion upon other men's souls, or had been caught up to the third heavens, and had brought from thence an extract of the Book of Life to Cambuslang, and to give out attested confirmations concerning the truth, of the saving work of conversion upon as many souls as they please to condescend upon, they give out accounts to the world of a wonderful work of conversion at Cambuslang ; so presumptuous are they ! while in the mean time upon admitting the word of God to be judge, this work will be found to be rather a deep delusion of Satan, than a saving work of the Spirit of God ; for their presumption in meddling with the secret will of God, and giving out determinations, without warrant in his revealed will, is a sufficient confirmation that it is a work of error, vanity, and delusion."

This was taking ground which many would have trembled to assume. Robe, in the preface to his ' Narrative,' calls this act of the Associate Presbytery, " the most heaven-daring paper that hath been published by any set of men in Britain, these three hundred years past." At this distance of time the matter can be viewed in a softened light, and a very considerable allowance made for passion, prejudice, and early education. Toleration was then a bugbear. " Catholic communion," among those who were agreed on the " essentials" of religion, but who differed in " lesser things," was directly opposed to the very letter and spirit of the presbyterian covenanted Reformation. Now these doctrines were not only strenuously advocated by Whitefield, but many also of the church of Scotland, who were once as zealous for the covenants as the Seceders, gave to the winds their former opinions, and adopted for the time comprehensive and tolerant principles. Forbearance in matters of ecclesiastical polity became the cry of the revivalists, whereas strict uniformity in doctrine, discipline, worship, and church government, was strenuously sought after by the Seceders. The leading principle of the Secession was testifying against the slightest degree of relaxation in the principles and practice of the covenanted church of Scotland. Its leading men, who were no ordinary persons, had, after much prayer and consultation, arrived at the conviction that they were contending for the truth, felt that they were maintaining it amid manifold sacrifices, and were farther persuaded that " the church of Scotland was a corrupt church, whose communion at the time was unscriptural and unsafe," and therefore

they were staggered when they heard of the Spirit of God descending so copiously upon its ordinances. When they thought of the instrument also which was mainly employed, and the extravagances which were in too many instances displayed, they, without sufficient caution, pronounced the "work" a "delusion of Satan."

Another reason was probably at work which has been entirely overlooked, but which, taking human nature as it is, can, without a breach of charity, be understood to have given no slight degree of edge to their "act of condemnation." The conflict between the Church and Secession had now come to a crisis. The Seceders had been finally deposed in 1739 by the General Assembly as unworthy to preach the gospel, and this sentence, which was hung over them for a twelvemonth to see if they would repent and return to the Church, was confirmed in 1740, and ordered to take effect. It was easier, however, to give the order than to execute it. Ralph Erskine and others had protested against the connection ever being dissolved between them and their people. By the connivance of the magistrates of Dunfermline and Burntisland, both he and Mr. Thomson had hitherto managed to retain their churches in spite of the sentence of deposition. They set the thunders of the Assembly at defiance. Ralph had a meeting-house built for himself, in which he preached one part of the day, as Dunfermline was a collegiate charge; but he always took his turn likewise in the parish church. This was bearding the Assembly and setting them at nought. In the year 1742, the Assembly took strong measures, and resolved to apply to the civil government for legal redress of this grievance and contempt. They ordered "that letters be written to the secretary of state and his Majesty's advocate, to the end that said sentence of deposition be supported and rendered effectual, and that the vacant churches be planted without delay." At the very time, therefore, when the church was glorying in her revivals, she was applying the bayonet to the Seceders; and no wonder that they did not think "mother church" very spiritual, when she was ejecting them from their pulpits by carnal weapons. The excitement in Dunfermline when Ralph was thrust out by force, almost reached to a breach of the peace. Passion can ill brook patience. It is very remarkable that the act for "the fast" was issued by the Seceders at Dunfermline on the 15th July, and it was to be observed on the 4th of August. Ralph



having been ejected from his pulpit, issued a "warning" in relation to this invasion attempted on his ministry on the 6th June, and a second one on the 22d August, 1742. In both of these papers he uses very strong language. "I reckon," says he, "my being persecuted in my office and ministerial work more gross and heinous than any outward or corporeal persecution, and which tends to bring the greatest wrath on all who would call another minister in my room." He resisted giving up his pulpit till a person high in civil authority told him that his forcing himself into it would be considered and punished as an act of "rebellion." He then desisted. What showed that these violent proceedings had no small influence in provoking to the "fast and condemnatory act," is not only the fact that they agree as to time; but farther, the ministers who signaled themselves in maintaining from the press that the "*Cam-buslang wark*" was a delusion of the devil, were Ralph Erskine of Dunfermline, Fisher of Glasgow, married to his sister, and Gib of Edinburgh, who was a native of Dunfermline, and all of whom were deeply interested in the violent ejection of Ralph from his ministerial charge. These good men might not even themselves be aware that their judgments were influenced by the bold and coercive measures of the Assembly, and yet others may readily perceive that the rankling ills of civil ejection and clerical deposition, as if they had been the refuse of the earth, were untoward circumstances for them to be placed in, and from the midst of which it was impossible to give a correct and dispassionate opinion concerning the religion of their enemies. It is well known that personal wrongs, even with the best of men, will influence to a very great degree public procedure, and tinge it unwittingly with a spirit of recrimination.

Whitefield at first rather gloried in the persecution and hard names applied to him, and the effect of his preaching by Erskine, Fisher, and Gib;\* but he soon felt the necessity of

\* The title-page of Gib's pamphlet is worth preserving. It is a perfect mirror to reflect its contents and the spirit of the times, without which history is worthless: "A Warning against Countenancing the Ministrations of Mr. George Whitefield, published in the New Church at Bristow, upon Sabbath, June 6, 1742. Together with an Appendix upon the same Subject, wherein are shewn, that Mr. Whitefield is no Minister of Jesus Christ; that his Call and Coming to Scotland are scandalous; that his Practise is disorderly, and fertile of disorder; that his whole Doctrine is, and his Success must be, diabolical; so that people ought to avoid him, from Duty to God, to the Church, to themselves, to Fellow-



defending himself from the pointed accusations which the Seceders brought against him. In a long letter to Willison of Dundee he entered into an explanation of his principles, and "how he would bear with all others who do not err in fundamentals, and who gave evidence that they were true lovers of the Lord Jesus." Well might Ralph and Whitefield, when they met some years afterwards, and when Ralph had been a second time deposed by the Anti-burgher portion of the Seceders, embrace each other, and say, "We have seen strange things."

These occurrences, which may seem at first sight extraneous to the History of Gillespie, contributed greatly to mould his character, and to impart to the Relief synod, of which he was afterwards the founder, some of its distinguishing characteristics. Gillespie, as well as Bain, belonged to the party that carried on these revivals,—aiding at them, associating with Whitefield, and adopting the sentiments which had then become current. "God," said Willison of Dundee in the Weekly History, which was their kind of Gazette, "by owning Whitefield so wonderfully, is pleased to give a rebuke to our intemperate bigotry and party zeal, and to tell us that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth any thing, -but the new creature. Commend me to a Jesus Christ exalting and soul winning minister, whatever be his denomination."\*

Gillespie was the particular friend of Robe, and his principal assistant during the revival at Kilsyth. "At the beginning of this work," says he, "Mr. Young, preacher of the gospel, who had been much at Cambuslang, and had great experience and skill in dealing with the distressed, was greatly helpful to me. But of all others the Rev. Mr. Thomas Gillespie, Minister of the Gospel at Carnock, was most remarkably *God's send* to me. He came to me on the Monday before the Lord's supper was given in the congregation, and staid ten days. Both of us had as much work among the distressed as kept us continually employed from morning to night, and without him, humanly speaking, many of them must have miscarried, or continued much longer in their spiritual distress."† He is mentioned repeatedly

men, to Posterity, and to him. By ADAM GIB, Minister of the Gospel at Edinburgh. 'In the last days perillous times shall come,' 2 Tim. iii. 1. 'For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets,' Matth. xxiv. 24. The Second Edition. Edinburgh: MDCCXLII."

\* Number 13.

† Narrative, p. 96.

in the 'Narrative.' His very first sermon seems to have been greatly blessed. "This evening there was a great cry in the church. Mr. Gillespie, minister of Carnock, who came here this afternoon, preached." Whitefield was at this sacrament in July, and it can easily be conceived how that Gillespie, who was only in the second year of his ministry, would be disposed to admire his touching appeals and adopt his sentiments. On his return to Carnock he wrote an attestation in favour of the scenes which he had witnessed, as proceeding from the Spirit of God. "Having lately," he writes, "been at Kilsyth, for some time, with pleasure and thankfulness I did observe, what in my humble apprehension, is a saving work of the Spirit of God, upon the souls of a great many persons of different ages, with whom I particularly conversed, brought under concern within these few months. Their different exercise, as related to me, appeared solid, scriptural, and entirely agreeable with the sentiments of learned judicious divines, whom I have heard treat the subject of conversion, or whose writings on that head I have perused. I found what I take to be evidence of love to all who bear the image of Christ, and desire of the salvation of others, prevalent in the minds of them who have attained in some measure peace in believing; and in some a considerable degree of spiritual joy. By what I can judge, the uncommon symptoms with which the trouble of some is attended, do flow from the clear and deep discovery they receive of the evil of sin, and the danger and misery of one's being without interest in the Saviour. I saw persons instantly seized with them in a very affecting way, and entirely relieved upon attaining the well-grounded hope of being reconciled to God through Christ. They seemed generally afraid of a mistake, and of taking comfort without sufficient reason, and disposed to weigh their experience in the balance of scripture. Most of them perceived and groaned under the evil of unbelief; and the more bright views of the sovereignty and riches of grace, and the glory of Christ any were blessed with, the more vile were they in their own eyes, on account of sin that had crucified the Saviour, an expression almost all of them used. I could with all freedom say more, and descend to particulars in different kinds, were it needful."

At the second sacrament, which was dispensed at Kilsyth on the 3d October of the same year, because the extraordinary circumstances of the parish and adjoining districts required it, Gillespie

was also present, and engaged in the interesting solemnities. One of his auditory thus described afterwards to Mr. Robe the effect of his discourse upon her, “That upon the Saturday, while Mr. Gillespie, minister of the gospel at Carnock, was preaching from Ezek. xvi. 8, ‘Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine,’—she was filled with a rapture of love to the Lord Jesus Christ; that, during the former part of the day she had been, to her apprehension, dead, and was continually inviting Christ to come to her soul; and that when Mr. Gillespie entered the tent she prayed that the Lord might come, in the power of his Spirit, to her soul, and to many other souls, and make his word effectual to her and them. And that when she thought upon redeeming love represented to her, she fell into a frame of wondering at that infinite love that set infinite wisdom a-working to contrive the salvation of man; and that when she thought upon his arm’s bringing salvation for lost sinners, and his fury upholding him, when there was no eye to pity, she thought it was a time of love, and the wonder of wonders; it put her in a rapture, that scripture coming also into her remembrance, ‘Now is the accepted time, and day of salvation;’ that it was so to her soul, because she was believing upon the Lord Jesus Christ; and she had earnest desires that it might be so to all other souls; and that this is her ordinary when she finds her soul filled with love to Christ, her concern goes from herself to others, desiring that all others might love Christ and come to him; and that it was with the greatest difficulty that she got herself kept from crying out; and that she had such meltings of heart as she is not able to express it; and that she was made many a time to say, ‘I am thine, save thou me, My Lord, and my God;’—and in her way home she with difficulty kept from crying out, ‘Come all ye that fear the Lord, and I will tell you what he has done for my soul;’—and that then, as it is also with her at other times, she was more earnest and desirous to be saved from sin than from wrath, remembering that without holiness no man shall see the Lord.—She continued in a lively frame all that night;—in the morning she awakened with that scripture, ‘Come see a man hath told me all that ever I did, is not this the Christ?’ This, said she, filled me with wonder at his glory, and her feeling the drawings

out of her heart after him, which is better felt than can be expressed.”\*

As the Erskines and Gillespie were thus found taking opposite views of the same religious movement, and publishing them to the world, and the work of the one was pronounced a delusion of Satan by the other, they were thereby, alas! still farther alienated. He had embarked with all his soul in promoting a work which he considered of God, but which they considered a delusion of Satan. Their condemnatory act was passed on the fifteenth of July at Dunfermline, and his “attestation” was written on the twentieth of the same month at Carnock. No one can mark the closeness of their dates, and observe that the places were also adjoining parishes, without remarking that Gillespie must have been stung by their “Declaration.” There might also in his mind be the rankling of an old sore, as he had himself quarrelled with the Seceders about the covenants and their terms of communion. Besides, the Rev. Mr. Wardlaw, the colleague of Mr. Erskine in Dunfermline parish church, and the warm friend of Gillespie, who had recommended him to Dr. Doddridge, had died this spring, and latterly between Wardlaw and Erskine there had been much keenness of feeling, breaking out occasionally in assaults and counter-assaults from the pulpit. In such times no man stood neutral, and a person of Gillespie’s bristly temper could not remain insensible to the acts and doings of the Seceders. His friendships and associations threw him among those ministers in the Church who were now the bitterest and sternest adversaries of the Erskines, though they had once been their humble followers.† The popular party in

\* Christian Monthly History, p. 68. Edin. 1743.

† As an index of the temper of the times, the same Assembly, 1739, which deposed the Seceders, restored Mr. John Glass to the status of a minister of the gospel of Christ. He had been deposed in 1730 for holding Independent principles. These he had not given up. In 1737, however, he had written a sarcastic pamphlet against the covenanting principles of the Secession. He therefore received his reward. The reasoning of Adams, in his ‘View of all Religions,’ on this fact, is anything but correct. He intimates, that “the Church wished by it to show what mercy the Seceders would meet with if they would only submit.” Glass did not submit, but he rendered effective service against the common enemy, and was hailed, to a certain extent, as a useful auxiliary. He was not restored, however, to the office of the ministry in the *Church of Scotland*. He had his sentence merely changed from deposition to exclusion. The Rev. John Currie, Kinglassie, received from the commission, in 1741, a more tangible recompense. For several years he had been all but a Seceder. He protested at first against the

the Establishment now blamed the Seceders for breaking up the unity of the Church, and the Seceders blamed them for flinching from their former professions, falling in with their opposers, and weakening their hands in the work of reformation. When friends differ, they are foes indeed.

severity of the sentence passed upon them. But having deserted them, and even written bitterly against his old friends, he had £00 voted him out of the funds of the church for *defending its principles!* It was the price of turning king's evidence.—*Glass's Works*, vol. ii. *Minutes of Assembly*.



## CHAPTER III.

### GILLESPIE'S OPINIONS, CHARACTER, AND MINISTERIAL LABOURS, AT CARNOCK.

GILLESPIE'S ideas on church government were in advance of the age in which he lived. He disliked the stern and bigoted views of Presbyterian church government which were advocated by the old covenanters, who vowed to extirpate popery, prelacy, and all manner of heresies. His withdrawal from the Secession hall, and his repairing to the academy of Dr. Doddridge, and receiving license and ordination from the English dissenters, are pretty sure indications of what were his early leanings. The Rev. Alexander Perrie, Blairlogie, says, "Gillespie on the other side of the Tweed, was a zealous Independent."\* Perrie, however, may state the matter strongly, as he and Gillespie were not on the best of terms. Smith, the successor of Gillespie, in his 'Historical Sketches of the Relief Church,' says, "Though he once was a little tinctured with Independent principles, yet he afterwards heartily approved of the presbyterian scheme."†

The principal source from which information can be got concerning Gillespie's views on ecclesiastical polity, is his 'Treatise on Temptation;' and in it his opinions are introduced rather as so many facts than reasoned upon as so many topics of discussion. This treatise was written before 1744. He was then but a few years a minister, and was still in connection with the Church of Scotland. It was published after his death with a memoir and recommendatory preface, by his warm friend Dr. Erskine, in the year 1774. In it he points out the temptations to which legislators, magistrates, ministers, and other classes of the community, are exposed from the assaults of Satan. His opinions on various

\* Three letters to the author of a pamphlet, entitled 'Reasons by a Lay-member of Presbytery of Relief, which induced him to join the majority in refusing to concur with a call from the congregation of Blairlogie to Mr. Alexander Perrie,' page 28.

† Page 28.

matters come out when he is laying down his pointed counsels. On reading them, it is impossible not to be led irresistibly to the conclusion, that Gillespie's making his way out of the Church of Scotland, when once he began to act upon them, was nothing more than what might have been expected.

Like the popular party at the time in the Church of Scotland, he had very correct and scriptural views concerning what was called the "Headship of Christ." He held that the kingdom of Christ and the kingdoms of this world were altogether distinct; and that as the one was spiritual and the other civil, they should not interfere with each other. The authority of Christ he held to be supreme in his church, and that his kingdom was in the conscience. While he considered it a temptation of Satan that legislators should claim a power in religious matters, and make themselves the last judicial resort in these things, he was equally strenuous in insisting that Christians were indispensably bound to be subject to the government of the country in civil matters, and to yield to it both obedience and tribute when they were legally required. The following extract is very explicit: "Satan tempts legislators to invade the prerogative of the Lord Jesus, by claiming a power in matters religious, with which he has not intrusted them, or seeking to make themselves the last resort in all causes of such kind, in direct opposition to the authority of Christ, who alone is Lord of the conscience, has erected his tribunal in it, has declared his kingdom is not of this world, at the same time that he does not permit the concerns of his kingdom to interfere in any respect or degree with those of the kingdoms of this world, having indispensably bound his people to be subject to the authority and lawful commands of magistrates in all civil matters."

With Mr. Gillespie the rights of conscience were sacred. He did not chime in with the popular doctrine of the day, that there should be a covenanted king sworn to maintain the truth; and that all heretics who differed from him might be "lawfully proceeded against by the power of the civil magistrate." Under Doddridge he had learned, as already noticed, that "if it be the duty of the magistrate to establish and defend *any* religion by penalties, he must establish and defend that which he takes to be true," and that, on this principle, "the greater part of them would persecute truth, and establish falsehood." He, therefore, held it was a device of Satan when magistrates were tempted "to persecute for conscience'

sake, and to make their conscience the standard, and their belief the rule to all their subjects. This point, which Satan labours above most others, he prosecutes by the instrumentality of atheistical profligate courtiers, but more especially by that of corrupt churchmen, who represent them they would have persecuted as not only schismatics, but seditious persons, and get them cruelly treated as enemies to the state." Gillespie had the wisdom to perceive that all persecutions were attempted to be based upon "rebellion against Cæsar," and, therefore, he denounced them entirely, and the hypocritical pretences from which they proceeded.

He was a strenuous advocate also for the election of the minister by the Christian people. He considered patronage not as a grievance, but as "an antichristian usurpation." He equally condemned those who exercised it, and the people who submitted to it, and the ministers who countenanced it by their acts, while yet in language they were strongly denouncing it. The whole band of "patrons, heritors, town-councillors, factors, presbyteries," were considered by him the "agents of Satan," when they endeavoured to force a presentee "upon an unwilling and reclaiming congregation."\* He blamed the people "for dropping and forbearing that opposition which was incumbent upon them against an intruder."† When he speaks of the ministers of religion aiding and abetting those who would fawn upon the great, and deprive the congregation of their right to choose their own pastor to please ministers of state and gentlemen of influence, he breaks out: "A notable instance of the art of hell is Satan's influencing ministers, where are legal establishments, to countenance the exercise of patronage, at the same time that they acknowledge it to be an antichristian usurpation."

These are very enlightened sentiments concerning the independence and spiritual nature of the kingdom of Christ, and the rights and liberties which a Christian people should possess and exercise without check or restraint from any quarter whatever. The surprise is, not that the maintainer of such sentiments should have been extruded from a church where patronage was the law, but that he should ever have been found within its pale. Strange practical inconsistencies occur in the lives of the best of men. Principles may sleep for ages. Events, and these unlooked for, will bring them into action.

\* Page 145.

† Page 146.

In his religious principles Gillespie was a staunch Calvinist, and a great admirer of the writings of Boston, who had been his spiritual father. He considered what is usually called "moral preaching," in which there was no reference to the "efficacy of Christ's sacrifice by the Spirit," as a "cunning art of the devil for ruining souls. Such teaching Satan knows is no food to the soul, and therefore disposes the minister to deal with his people, as if they were still in the state of primitive integrity, by which the cunning seducer influences these people to attempt to build without laying the foundation, and designs to cause them kindle a fire, and compass themselves about with sparks, that they may be made to lie down in sorrow."\*

He held the doctrine of instant repentance and belief whensoever the offers of the gospel were made; and this enabled him to ply the conscience with every possible motive which could upon the spot produce conversion. "The command," he says, "of the Lord, 1 John iii. 23, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, no less binds the sinner to immediate performance than the command not to kill, to keep the Sabbath-day, or any other duty as to the present performance of which, in way of duty, all agree, the sinner is bound. I suppose none of us think we are authorized or will adventure to preach, that the sinner should delay to attempt to believe in the Saviour, till he finds light from heaven shining into his mind, or has got a saving sight or discovery of the Lord Jesus, though it is certain he cannot believe, nor will do it effectually, till favoured with such light or sight; because we should, in that event, put in a qualification where the apostle Paul and Silas did put none; such is their exhortation to the jailor, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house,' Acts xvi. 31. Also, as it may be the last call the sinner is to receive, in dispensation of the word, we are bound to require him *instantly* to believe, whatever he does, or does not feel in himself."† These sentiments well accord with the practice of one who had been a main instrument in awakening souls at Kilsyth and Muthil; and if uniformly believed and acted upon in preaching the gospel, would impart to its message great warmth and cogency. It has a deadening influence to teach sinners that they are to wait for spiritual light within before they believe. It is a sense of drowning and not of

\* Page 144.

† Gillespie's Letters to President Edwards, Quarterly Mag., vol. i. p. 33.



preservation that causes men to cling to the ark of God for safety. The end is not to be put before the means.

There was one theological topic which exercised much of Mr. Gillespie's attention, and which showed that he was a discriminating and judicious divine, and would not suffer himself to be led astray even by those he most sincerely admired. He rejoiced in the success of Whitefield, and in "the largeness of his audiences." He writes to Edwards in 1748:—"I wish his (conversions) may be as frequent as when he was last here. May divine power specially attend his ministrations! We need it much, as we are generally fallen under great deadness. I believe he will find great use for all his prudence and patience in dealing with us for different reasons. With great pleasure, friends to vital religion and to him are informed that he is to make no collections at this time. I was glad to hear you write he laboured with success in New England in rectifying mistakes he had favoured about *intimations made by the Lord to his people*, &c., and heartily wish he may be directed to apply an antidote here where it is also *needed*." \*

The synods of Glasgow and Perth, and the presbytery of Edinburgh, had each of them moved that means should be employed for keeping Mr. Whitefield out of the pulpits of the Establishment. The principles on which they proceeded were his doctrine of "immediate revelations," and they were just as unamiable, if a person may judge from those of the synod of Glasgow, as those which influenced the Seceders. They were, besides, tarnished with the glaring inconsistency of wishing to cast one off, whom they had formerly courted and caressed. The speech with which Mr. Millar of Hamilton introduced his motion was every whit as sectarian as that of Mr. Moncrieff: "Shall we tacitly condemn the noble struggles of our worthy ancestors against hearing prelates, by discovering a supine indifference, while a priest of the church of England is caressed and encouraged by multitudes of our people, nay, by ministers themselves? By one of our barrier acts, signing the Confession of Faith, or formula, is made a term of ministerial communion with us. And it is not pretended by Mr. Whitefield's friends, that he has signed either. Shall we then part with so fundamental a branch of our constitution, especially in favour of one of unknown or

\* Quarterly Mag., vol. i. p. 194.



doubtful character? One whom, I persuade myself, none within these walls will venture to pronounce a man of good report, which yet is a necessary qualification of a gospel minister. . . . Has he not encouraged a dependence on impulses and immediate revelations, as if men were now to expect the same extraordinary guidance of the Spirit with which Christians in the primitive times were favoured? Has he not, on slender evidence, declared some people converted, and pronounced others carnal and unregenerate?"\*

Gillespie could separate the wheat from the chaff. While he loved Whitefield as an instrument of much good, he set himself seriously to examine the doctrine "of impulses and immediate revelations" which was spreading throughout the country, and generating a wild and enthusiastic spirit among religious professors. The name of Whitefield could not ensnare him. So early as 1746, he consulted President Edwards on the point. "I longed much to see somewhat about impressions respecting facts and future events, &c., whether by scripture-texts or otherwise, made on the minds of good people, and supposed to be from the Lord; for I have too good occasion to know the hurtful, yea, pernicious tendency of this principle, as commonly managed, upon many persons in manifold instances and various respects. It has indeed surprised me much, that wise, holy, and learned divines, as well as others, have supposed this a spiritual experience, an answer of prayers, an evidence of being highly favoured by the Lord, &c., and I was exceeding glad, that the Lord had directed you to give so seasonable a caveat against what I am assured you had the best reason to term, 'A handle in the hand of the devil,' &c. I was only sorry your then design had not permitted you to say more on that point." As this subject deeply engaged his thoughts, he wrote an Essay on it, which was afterwards published by Dr. Erskine, (1771,) with a Preface highly commendatory of the author.† He states the arguments on both sides fairly, closely, and with much perspicuity; and afterwards winds up his subject by delivering his decided opinion against all immediate revelations, as the canon of scripture was closed and

\* A Fair and Impartial Account of the Debate in the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr, 6th October, 1748, anent employing Mr. Whitefield, pp. 4, 5, 6.

† An Essay on the Continuance of immediate Revelations of Facts and Future Events in the Christian Church. By the Rev. Mr. Thomas Gillespie, Minister of the Gospel at Dunfermline.

the vision was sealed. The mode of his arguing is in the following strain, and it possesses great cogency :—"The Lord now speaks to his church, not immediately as to patriarchs and prophets, who did not enjoy the canon of scripture; but mediately, by his written word, as a perfect and infallible rule of faith and practice; just as the king of Great Britain speaks to his subjects only by acts of parliament, and proclamations, with advice of his council. This seems declared in the plainest and strongest manner, Heb. i. 1, 2. 'God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son;' for Christ the Son of God speaks to his church by his word, John v. 39. Thus, as all divine revelations are mediate since the canon of the scripture was completed, there are no immediate revelations. . . . The object and ground of all divine faith is the divine testimony, the written word of God. There is no bottom for faith of immediate revelations in scripture; and as faith in them terminates on no testimony of God in his word, such immediate revelation, and faith of it, must be a human fancy. All prophets (except ordinary teachers in the church, sometimes signified by that name) had the power to work miracles, to confirm their divine mission as prophets, or at least the one gift attended the other in the church; and as the gift of working miracles confessedly expired at the end of the apostolical age, or soon after, so must also the gift of prophecy, or immediate revelations, have expired. There is nothing in scripture to countenance the supposition of immediate divine revelations still continued in the Christian church."

These sentiments are highly honourable to Gillespie. They point him out not only as a judicious and discriminating theologian, but as a man who preferred sound doctrine to what he considered the lamentable delusions of his friends. He was also constitutionally predisposed to the very doctrine he so strongly denounces. He was the slave of nervous weaknesses, and was often distressed with the temptations of Satan. A tender conscience, dark melancholy moods of mind, and continual striving against the inward power of sin, made him dread not only the wiles of the devil, but also led him even to believe in his personal manifestations that he might render his assaults more formidable. In the midst of these impressions he yet denied immediate revelations by the Spirit of God, as they opened the way

to fanaticism, and introduced into the church a higher authority than the written word of God.

Whitefield found it necessary to modify some of his strong statements about "impressions," and thereby to propitiate the rising indignation of the most judicious divines both in Britain and America. He does it with a frankness, which makes one even love the man amid his unguarded extravagances. "Alas! alas! in how many things have I judged and acted wrong. I have been too rash and hasty in giving characters both of places and persons:—being fond of scripture language, I have often used a style too apostolical, and at the same time I have been too bitter in my zeal;—wild-fire has been mixed with it, and I find I have frequently wrote and spoke in my own spirit, when I thought I was writing and speaking by the assistance of the Spirit of God:—I have likewise too much made *impressions* my rule of acting, and too soon and too explicitly published what had better been kept in longer, or left to be told after my death.—By these things I have given some wrong touches to God's ark, and hurt the blessed cause I would defend, and stirred up needless opposition." \*

Gillespie was a truly good man,—equally watchful over the sinful movements of his own heart as he was over the outbreaks of heresy or "pretended revelations" in the church. His heart must be made of stone who can read the account which he gave of himself and of his temptations to President Edwards, and yet not be moved. His letters to him show that he was indeed a watchful and praying Christian, and that he laboured amid tears and sighs to crucify the lusts of the flesh, and all that could offend the eye of a pure Jehovah. In a spirit of genuine modesty he states his own case to him in the third person, though the vail is continually falling off and revealing the person who speaks. "What should one do who is incessantly harassed by Satan; can by no means keep him out of his mind; has used all means prescribed in Scripture and suggested by divines for resistance, known to him, in vain; it may be for a long time has cried to Christ, but he hears not, seems not to regard him; all his efforts are swallowed up in the deluge of the foe; do what he will, seems to gain no ground against the powers of darkness; is apt to dread he shall sink under the load, and never shall be delivered in this world? what would you advise

\* Letter from Mr. Whitefield to Mr. Smith, Minister in Charlestown, Carolina, written on board the Brigg Betsy, Captain Esteen, June 24th, 1748.

such a person to do? what construction, think you, should he put on the sovereign conduct and dispensation of Heaven toward him? I have occasion to be conversant about this case practically demonstrated, of many years continuance, without interruption; and will therefore be glad to have your mind about it in a particular manner, and as much at large as you conveniently can."

These Satanic temptations and nervous vapours, which were so distressing to Gillespie, were nevertheless of signal use to him in his ministry. They not only kept him upon his knees in prayer, but they caused him to cultivate a thorough acquaintance with his own heart, and qualified him in a remarkable manner to analyze and dispel the Christian's doubts and temptations. He was a soul-searching preacher. Dr. Erskine, who was several months his stated hearer, and who often heard him on other occasions, and whom all will acknowledge to have been a competent judge, says, "I never sat under a ministry better calculated to awaken the thoughtless and secure, to caution convinced sinners against what would stifle convictions, or prevent their issuing in conversion, and to point out the differences between vital Christianity, and specious counterfeit appearances of it."

Such is a short sketch of the principles and opinions, the character and attainments, the honesty, the piety, and the tenderness of conscience, which endeared Mr. Gillespie to a wide circle of religious friends, when an event occurred that brought his principles into action, and introduced a new era into the religious history of Scotland. When a deliverance is to be wrought out, God can find his instrument in a quiet retired pastor feeding his sheep in the wilderness.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE STATE OF RELIGION AND OF RELIGIOUS PARTIES IN BRITAIN, PRIOR TO GILLESPIE'S DEPOSITION.

BOTH England and Scotland had passed through great religious convulsions at the era of the reformation from Popery, and in neither country had the storm yet settled down into a perfect calm. There had been bloody struggles among all the religious parties for pre-eminence, and according as the one or the other was for the time in the ascendant, coercion and compulsion, or toleration and liberty of conscience, were strenuously advocated by them. With their own elevation or depression, they were as changeable as children in their views of religious liberty. This was an ugly feature in the character and doings of the reformers.

In England the reformation had been taken under the protecting wing of the court, and as the great aim of Henry VIII. and his successors was to constitute themselves head of the Church of England, instead of the Pope, as few changes as possible were made in the external and internal economy of the Establishment. The ritual was partly remodelled so as not altogether to exasperate the people, who were loudly demanding the purification of the temple, but the whole fabric was in a great measure preserved entire, and its ordinary revenues and useless offices were scarcely touched. This gave rise to perpetual complaints and persecutions during the reigns of Henry, Elizabeth, and James. Many fled to Holland, Geneva, and France, to escape the civil penalties which they knew were to be inflicted upon them; and coming into contact in these places with Scotch Presbyterians, they had their wrath inflamed still more against Episcopacy, as being a remnant of Papacy, and returned when the immediate danger which threatened them had passed away, with a still more determined purpose to carry forward the reformation of their country. They envied the Scotch, who had done the work in a manner far more



effectual than the English. The Scotch divines, on the other hand, kept nursing their zeal and discontent, and every now and then were blowing a blast of their Presbyterian trumpet to rouse them into action. The insane attempts of James and Charles First to force Episcopacy upon the Scotch, brought the Puritans in England (so called, because they desired a *purer* dispensation of religious ordinances) and the Scotch Presbyterians into a very close league of friendship. Their religious interests were felt to be perfectly identified, and they deeply sympathized with each other in their bloody struggles against a tyrannical and Episcopal court.

Charles I., pressed by innumerable difficulties, agreed that parliament should convoke a number of the best divines in Britain at Westminster, in 1643, for the purpose "of purging the Liturgy as to the doctrine, government, and discipline of the Church of England, and bringing it nearer to an agreement with the *Church of Scotland*, and other reformed churches abroad." The Scotch, by various means, were ready to further the views of their English brethren. They not only sent commissioners to the assembly of divines at Westminster, but they prepared a paper, called the "Solemn League and Covenant," which they signed themselves, and sent up to the parliament in London and the Assembly, in which they bound themselves by solemn oath, "to endeavour the *preservation* of the reformed religion in the Church of Scotland in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, and the reformation of religion in the kingdoms of England and Ireland." Lest an oath should not be sufficiently stringent, the Scotch sent also an army into England, as a hint to the parliament to swear the covenant with all convenient speed if they did not wish to feel the force of a Lochaber-axe. As the king and the parliament were coming to a rupture, they dexterously showed both parties that they could turn the scale, while they unequivocally intimated to the Puritans that, if they continued steadfast to Presbyterian uniformity, they would prove their friends. The Scotch army was indirectly employed to decide many a difficult point of church order, and, by pointing to their swords, compelled many a scrupulous parliamentary conscience to swear that he would "extirpate Popery and Prelacy." The Westminster Assembly were remarkably agreed indeed on the great doctrines of Christianity; but they did not see eye to eye among themselves about church order, and were even restrained and thwarted as

to the power of the church in religious ordinances by the parliament which had called them together. Baillie, one of the Scotch commissioners, writing from London, says, "Had it been God's will that our army, this summer, had done any service, we had long before this obtained all our desires; or yet, if we could send any considerable force to Newark, we should have great influence in their counsels. . . . The Independents, in their last meeting of our grand committee of accommodation, have expressed their desires for toleration, not only to themselves, but to other sects. The parliament has no great inclination to satisfy either. What may come of this we know not; only it were our heart's desire that our army at Newark were recruited. Nothing is better for the good of Scotland, for the welfare of the whole isle and the Protestant religion."\* This state of things was very unpropitious for the spread of Presbyterianism in England, as it gave it a political aspect, and crowded its ranks with cowards and hypocrites, who enlisted under its banner from selfish motives.

The Assembly, trusting to the power of the sword, scouted the doctrine of toleration. They would not, even on petition, grant it to the Independents, a small band of whom were with themselves, but a stronger body of whom were with Cromwell in the army; and who, being much nearer London than the Scotch at Newark, latterly made their power to be more *forcibly* felt. The Church of Scotland, in their communications to the Assembly, strenuously objected to the toleration of all sects and parties, and as they, with their army in England, were, for the time, the presiding oracle, they were necessarily obeyed.

At the very moment when the king was tossed amid the contending factions like a withe of straw on the tempestuous ocean, the parliament decreed Presbyterianism the established religion in England; and, with a madness altogether unaccountable, began to extirpate Prelacy by ejecting the Episcopalian ministers and sequestrating their property. In desperate times men in power will do desperate things. Having previously quarrelled with the Independents, they now also exasperated the Episcopalians by passing an act against the use of their prayer-books, seizing their benefices, and only allowing a fifth of the emoluments to go to the support of the ejected Prelatic minister. The

\* Letter, Nov. 25th, 1645.

Presbyterian pastor got the other four-fifths. This was madness, if they really wished, as said, to save the king, whose prelatie leanings they very well knew. It was a bold attempt to get possession of the pulpits of the country. It did not succeed, however; Cromwell prevailed, and speedily put down what had been rashly and inconsiderately set up.

Having cast himself upon the generosity of the Scotch army, Charles I. was most perfidiously given up to his enemies. They might have tried him for crimes against the state as a constitutional monarch; but to hand over their own king to the Long Parliament, after he had taken refuge among them, for £400,000 of arrears of pay, was mean and earthy. He was afterwards tried, condemned, and executed, as a warning to all shuffling and tyrannical kings so long as the page of British history shall be read. It was a startling event. While it unquestionably brought many advantages in its train, and was an expiatory sacrifice on the altar of liberty, it left a stain upon the adherents of the "covenanted reformation" which was never wiped out. Though the Independents had a main hand in the deed, and the Presbyterians even opposed it as they disliked Cromwell and his party; yet, as the Long Parliament was a Presbyterian Parliament, and had sworn the Solemn League for the extirpation of church government by archbishops, bishops, chancellors, deans; and had even begun to do it with intemperate haste, they were considered as the regicides, and their name ever afterwards stank in the nostrils of the Episcopal English. It was a death-blow to the covenant in the southern part of the island, and Presbyterianism soon afterwards withered and declined. Politicians supported it no longer than it served their purpose.

On the restoration of Charles II., the Presbyterians of England and Scotland acted the most conspicuous part. As he had sworn at Seone nine years before, that he would support the Presbyterian church government according to "the Solemn League and Covenant in his own family in Scotland," and assent to its injunction in his other dominions, they naturally augured that the tide of affairs would turn again in their favour. A king's conscience, however, in state matters, is not very easily bound. Charles, who was a dissolute and perfidious prince, treated them with royal ingratitude. The English Presbyterians offered to concur in a modified system of Episcopacy, and to adopt a revised liturgy. "In October, 1660, a declaration from

his majesty concerning ecclesiastical affairs was prepared, and a meeting of Episcopal dignitaries and divines with the leading Presbyterian ministers, called to hear it read, and offer their objections to what either side disliked.”\*

The king having quickly restored Prelacy, in all its former splendour and intolerance, both in England and Scotland, two thousand of the clergy in England, who were inclined to Presbyterianism, or at least desired a farther reformation from Popery, resigned their churches and benefices rather than submit to the “Bartholomew act” of uniformity (1662), and conform to ecclesiastical corruptions which in their conscience they condemned. This was a noble example of Christian principle. Extruded from court favour, which they nobly bore, they also, from their own bitter experience, learned the folly of their covenanted dogma—UNIFORMITY. Toleration was now seen by them not to be such a detestable heresy as they, in the plenitude of their power, had formerly maintained and decreed. As Baxter their great leader tersely remarked: “All are for toleration that need it.” While they, however, learned the useful lesson of mutual forbearance in dungeons, the Church of England was by their resignation deprived, in one day, of by far the most learned, pious, and popular portion of her ministers. It is doubtful if even to this day she has recovered from the loss she then sustained. Deserted churches soon produced among the people gross ignorance, and the greatest moral depravity.

The Presbyterians, as well as the Independents and Baptists, continued proscribed sects till the cup of the Stuart dynasty was filled to the brim, and poured out like water never to be gathered up again. At the blessed revolution in 1688, the act of toleration was passed by William and Mary; and all who took the oaths of allegiance and supremacy, and subscribed merely the *doctrinal* articles of the Church of England, exclusive of those that referred to church order and government, were authorized to erect for themselves places of worship, and to worship according to the dictates of their conscience. This was a remarkable advance in religious liberty, though still there were some links of the old chain remaining upon certain classes of religionists.

As it blasted the hopes of the Presbyterians as to any compre-

\* Historical Inquiry into the Opinions, &c., of the English Presbyterians, p. 22, 1835.



hension scheme by which they would have been assumed as a part of the Establishment, they now put forth their energies as a voluntary church. "Within a single lustre (five years) after the revolution of 1688, and the passing of the toleration act, Presbyterianism covered the country with a thousand meeting-houses." Many a houseless minister now found a home. In the year 1691, a union between the Presbyterians and Independents, in and near London, was effected; and this was intended as a model to all the churches throughout the country. They had been gradually approximating for several years; and by laying aside some of the peculiarities of each party, they formed what was called "*The happy union*;" but in a very few years it fell to pieces. It was merely a piece of patch-work. Ecclesiastical and doctrinal peculiarities made it explode at the first touch like a piece of untempered glass. The Independents wished to carry some of the doctrines of Calvinism about predestination and faith higher than the Presbyterians were inclined to sanction, and, as honest men, they separated from each other, since their union was hollow and deceptive.

At this time the Presbyterians were sound in all the essential doctrines of Christianity, only a little inclined to Baxterianism. He was their apostle. At the close of Queen Anne's reign (1714) they formed at least two-thirds of the whole dissenting body. A change, however, a little before this, had begun to pass over them. It was at first silent and gradual,—and yet ultimately it has nearly destroyed them altogether. They by gentle changes passed from Baxterian doctrine, and became Arminian, and then Arian, and latterly Socinian. As it was at that time unlawful to preach Antitrinitarian doctrine, they did not attack the divinity of the Son and Spirit directly, but rather abstained from asserting it,—preached on practical subjects; and when they referred to Trinitarian doctrines, did it in scripture phrases so set and guarded, that they admitted of two interpretations. Their old standards, the Westminster Confession, and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, were laid aside, and the pastor was not required at his ordination to make any profession of his faith, but simply to receive the Bible as the word of God. It was not till 1718 that the fact came fairly out that the Presbyterians were deeply and thoroughly tainted with leanings towards Socinian opinions, and that even the Independents and Baptists were partially infected with the same dangerous heresy. At



that time Messrs. Pierce and Hallet of Exeter “had imbibed Arian tenets. These gentlemen were abruptly dismissed, or, to use their own expression, ‘ejected,’ by the committee who managed the concerns of the three united congregations in Exeter. Debates arising among the United Ministers of Devonshire and Cornwall on this occasion, the London ministers were consulted, and a meeting of those belonging to the three denominations, Presbyterian, Independent, and Baptist, was called at Salter’s Hall, February 19th, 1719, to consider of ‘Advices for Peace,’ to be sent to their brethren in the West. A division took place on the 24th, after warm debates, on the question, whether those Advices should be accompanied by a declaration of their own firm belief in the doctrine of the Trinity, as expressed in the first article of the Church of England, and the Assembly’s Shorter Catechism. A small majority decided in the negative.”\* This vote was excused on the ground that they had never been required to *subscribe* their belief in the doctrine of the Trinity at their ordination, but had simply stated it in words, and they would impose no new terms of communion upon their brethren in the country. Many were not satisfied with the explanation. Unitarian views now began to be openly broached. Dr. Taylor of Norwich, in 1740, attacked the doctrine of native depravity, and, in 1751, published his *Scripture Doctrine of the Atonement*—which in fact set aside the atonement; and thus the whole system of the modern Socinians—denying the Trinity, original sin, and salvation by the merits of Christ—was by the Presbyterians, aided slightly by the other dissenters, let loose upon the population of South Britain.

When things were at this low ebb in regard to correct scriptural doctrine among the English dissenters, and when matters were incomparably worse in the Established Church of England, Whitefield and the Wesleys were raised up to go as evangelists over the whole length and breadth of the land, and by their preaching to call men’s attention to the great truths of the Gospel, which had almost sunk into oblivion. Their doctrine was novel to the men of that age, and they were blamed as the inventors and propagators of a new religious system.

Connected with this sad declension of religion in England many inquiries have been put concerning its cause; and as many

\* Historical Inquiry concerning the Principles, &c., of the English Presbyterians, pp. 252, 253.

theories have been broached. It began with the Presbyterians, who were at the Restoration the best divines of the age. Such men as Manton, Baxter, and Calamy, Bates, Howe, Charnock, and P. Henry, were master spirits. Why did their successors so decline in doctrine that those who now preach in their churches are Socinians; and so waste away in number, that they are now a mere fraction of the people? Some say it arose from their ceasing to meet as presbyteries, and exact subscription to human standards. But this is no adequate reason; for the Independents have no presbyteries, exact no subscription, and take nothing but a verbal declaration of faith, and yet they did not greatly decline. Others say it was because their chapels were mostly endowed, and the Presbyterian ministers were independent of their people. There may be something in this; but it is not an adequate cause, for many of their chapels passed into the hands of the Independents, as being a class that preached purer doctrine. The proper cause must be sought in the very equivocal position of the Presbyterians in England at the time when the Westminster Assembly met. They were the Establishment to be. Ambitious statesmen cast in their lot with their future fortune. The Solemn League and Covenant was sworn by all the great officers of state, and promotion was connected with it. The Presbyterians were to be the men both in church and state who were to compel all others to conform, and who were to share amongst themselves the tithes and principedoms of ancient England. While the divines saw, or thought they saw, under a covenanted reformation, truth and purity and wholesome discipline, and all the restraints of law brought effectually to bear against heresy and impiety, the statesmen who summoned them to sit in council, were outwitting them in their counsels, and making them the mere ladder whereby to ascend to the higher places of the state. When the ladder suddenly broke, and the Presbyterian body were precipitated to a level with other dissenters, they carried along with them many persons of merely worldly views, who either deserted them, and joined the king's religion, or who still adhered to them from carnal policy, as those who had been once established, though for a very short time, and might be established again. Such men were not likely to submit to sound doctrine and church-discipline. The Independents, in some measure, escaped this evil, as their principles were opposed to a secular establishment of religion.

Another thing which militated much against the Presbyterians as a body, was their unsuccessful attempt to unite with the Episcopalians. It pointed out the road to many of their followers to join the church; and not less injurious was their unsuccessful effort to build up a united church with the Independents. It led to the breaking up of their presbyteries, and the formation of Independent churches in practice, which soon became so also in theory. Ashamed likewise, in process of time, of the persecuting principles of the covenant and of its stringent clauses, they rushed to an opposite extreme, and rashly discarded all human standards, even for the purpose of ascertaining how their ministers understood the Bible. They examined no candidates for church membership as to their religious principles, but left every man to join or withdraw from their churches without any conversation with him. They have thus become a warning set upon an hill, proclaiming that an ambitious and intolerant church, even though it has good men within its pale, shall be deserted by him who has said, "My kingdom is not of this world."

This was the state of religious matters in the South when Gillespie fell under the lash of the Assembly, was deposed, and the Relief sprang into being. The coolness and formality of England were appearing in Scotland; and everything like life and zeal for the essentials of religion was repressed and crushed. The two parts of the Island act and react upon each other more than a careless observer is apt at first sight to suppose.

It is necessary, however, that the state of religious affairs in Scotland should also be pretty fully detailed, else the rising into existence of a new religious party will seem rather to be an unnatural excrescence on the face of society, than the natural product of the opinions and policy of the age. In Scotland, religion passed through far greater perils after the Reformation, than ever it did in England; and, had it not previously struck its roots deep in the affections of the people, it would have been altogether destroyed. Grace was given for the time of need. The sufferings of the Church of Scotland are a tale of sanctified heroism. There is much in it to praise, and not a little to blame. From the year 1605, when the Assembly met, in spite of the sentence of prorogation pronounced by his majesty's commissioner, till the year 1688, when William and Mary were called to the throne, and Presbyterianism was fully established in Scotland, the Scotch, with a few short intervals

scarce worthy of being named, worshipped with their sword in their hand; and the contests between the King's troops wishing to establish Prelacy, and the people sworn by the covenant to extirpate it, were numerous and bloody. The best blood of Scotland was poured out like water. The effects of this long protracted struggle were most calamitous to the civil, moral, and religious interests of Scotland. Those who were possessed of wealth, and who were of a peaceful spirit, emigrated to the continent. The fierce and turbulent were left behind. Men of learning died out, and a race of preachers appeared on the hill sides, whose passions and sufferings made them eloquent. They knew the truth, and loved the covenants. A Cameron or Cargill, standing on the grave of a martyr to "Christ's crown," could make the hearts of thousands, with his bold eagle-cry, swell under their plaids, and cause their hands involuntarily to grasp the hilt of their swords. Those were not the days for the rustling of silks, but of good broad claymores, before a *tent*. Presbyteries and church courts were at an end. The civil law proscribed them. And what did a clergyman care for the judgment of a church court when he had a band of trusty Covenanters around him, and sat and presided in their councils of war? The sermon was the Gazette of the party; and, from it were learned the victories or defeats which were continually occurring in the varying chances of war. Candour will confess that the prelatie party were first in the affray, and that James taking up the insane maxim, "No Bishop no King," was led to commence a train of the most arbitrary measures against the Presbyterians, silencing their ministers, interdicting their assemblies, and treating their leaders as if they had been the refuse of the earth. The Presbyterians, however, did retaliate when they obtained the ascendancy, and would neither tolerate nor show mercy to Papists, Episcopalians, nor sectaries, because they believed them to be the enemies of God. The troopers butchered the Covenanters because they were rebels against the king, and would not adopt the king's religion; and the Covenanters bathed their swords in the blood of Prelatists because they were rebels against Christ, and would not adopt the covenants.

In looking back upon the severe contest which was thus carried on for a very long period between the kings of Scotland and the Covenanters, and balancing the accusations of both parties, so as to fix the blame where it is due, a candid mind will at once



confess that, after the quarrel was fairly begun, repeated acts of provocation were given on both sides, and that Episcopalian and Presbyterian partisans can easily blacken their opponents; but when this religious war is fairly traced back to its origin, the fault, in the first instance, as has been intimated in the preceding narrative, lies with royalty attempting to thwart the religion of the people. James and his successors wished to arrest rather than further the advancing steps of reformation from the forms and spirit of popery, and presumptuously claimed to be the last resort in all causes ecclesiastic as well as civil. They were continually intermeddling with church matters, and making inroads upon the rights of conscience. The Covenanters, on the other hand, frequently strove to make the king the servant of the church, and to convert him into a puppet to execute their decrees. They wished to crib him in, contrary to his consent, within the narrow limits of a Presbyterian cradle.

Without going farther back than the Assembly 1638, the seeds of the mortal conflict between the monarch and Presbyterian clergy were then abundantly sown, and the fruit were gathered afterwards in many a destructive battle. It was little better than mockery for the king first to summon them to a free assembly, and then to attempt to gag and dismiss them as slaves before they had well entered on business. There was more courage than discretion in *Established* ministers resisting the royal mandate "to dissolve," and then proceeding to depose his majesty's bishops from being bishops of Scotland, and even to declare it unlawful for them or any ecclesiastic "to sit and discern in council, session, or exchequer." While they were thus engaged in making acts against "kirkmen holding civil offices," they were, at the time, with the grossest and most flagrant inconsistency, grasping to themselves a fourth part of the civil authority of the country, by vesting the government of the kingdom in "FOUR TABLES," at Edinburgh, one of which Tables, or national committees, was to be composed of Presbyterian clergy. This was the point where they went decidedly wrong. It changed them into political priests, and was afterwards the source of endless troubles and jealousies. The Table of the priests, in the first instance, roused the people; for they had the pulpits on Sabbath to sound the alarm; but the greater their power to agitate, the more did the king and many of the Episcopal nobles hate and fear them. Carrying their notions of church communion into state affairs,



they got acts passed excluding every man from civil authority save Covenanters; and when they had purged, as they thought, the army and all government offices "of malignants," they had thereby made to themselves a host of enemies whom they had stripped of their rights as citizens, who instantly turned upon them, and beat down their sectarian government to the ground. The pressure from without speedily became too great for what they considered their state purity within. The people were undoubtedly entitled to combine for their rights and privileges, but not the clergy as clergy, and as a fourth estate of the kingdom; and to this must in a great measure be attributed many of the evils which long continued, and which to this day continue, to afflict the Church of Scotland. It generated a spirit of assumption in civil matters.

At the Revolution settlement 1688 the Presbyterian clergy triumphed, and the infatuated race of Stuarts were thrown off from the bosom of the nation like so much garbage cast from the tumultuous ocean upon the shore. William gave to the Covenanters, under the admirable management of Carstairs, a more favourable Presbyterian settlement than they could reasonably have expected, or than he himself in the first instance intended to sanction. It was dexterously manœuvred from him, and the continual plottings and outbreakings of the Jacobites or Episcopalians made him at last see that the Presbyterians were the best friends of his throne.

The two leading principles of the settlement at the Revolution in Scotland, were the establishment of Presbytery and the toleration of Episcopacy. From these the court, though plied with every possible argument, would never recede. The Episcopalian ministers were not incorporated into the Scotch Establishment. About three hundred of them, however, were received on very easy terms, without adopting the Formula of Presbyterian worship. In many towns there was a Presbyterian minister, supported voluntarily by the people, and an Episcopalian one, receiving the tithes till his death. The consequence was, that the Church of Scotland, for some time after the Revolution, partook much of the nature of a voluntary church. Its ministers, not only during the persecuting period, were chosen by the people, but many of them were so even after the Revolution. They were indeed, to a great extent, called and paid by their hearers. As there was such a mixture of Episcopalians in the church courts, their sentences were not much regarded in ecclesiastical

matters; and a great deal of personal liberty was claimed and enjoyed. Presbyterian pastors were in many things Independents, though they would, nevertheless, have scorned the name. Their horror of the sin of giving up their conscience, after the manner of the Papists, to any human council, made them claim a right to differ from each other, and to exercise for themselves a judgment of discretion. They vowed subjection to their brethren at their ordination, but it was "*only in the Lord*;" and they were not very ready either to explain or limit this qualifying clause, but kept it wrapped up in an indefinite meaning as a way of escape for a tender conscience when pressed by the authority of a church court.

The happy state of matters which followed the Revolution, introduced order and regularity into the Church of Scotland. The arm of civil and ecclesiastical law gradually became stronger, and the church, as being set up by the state, was subjected to its control. William kept a pretty tight rein over the Scotch Establishment, as not a few of its ministers still wished to make their communion-roll the only patent road to all civil offices. The nation, however, was sick of civil war. It sought repose. Many of the Presbyterian clergy had formerly taken advantage of the indulgences granted on certain conditions by Charles II. and James VII., and were not disposed again to go to the hill-sides, and therefore far more readily acquiesced in the law of toleration than they would otherwise have done, and very quietly bowed their necks and took the oaths of allegiance and assurance to the new dynasty. Without taking these oaths no person could be a minister in the Scotch Revolution Church; and, though it was acknowledging another term of communion than any enacted by Christ, it was nearly universally submitted to, that the benefits of the Establishment might be obtained. James Hogg, indeed, then of Dalserf, afterwards of Carnock, endeavoured to take his seat at a meeting of Assembly, without taking the Government oaths, because they were an Erastian qualification, but his Grace the Commissioner sent for him, and told him he must take the oaths, and take them as a minister and not as a civilian; and that, if he did not do so he would not allow him to sit in the Assembly, even although the Assembly decided otherwise. His name was accordingly kept off the roll, though he was allowed to sit among the members of the Assembly.\* William

\* Memoirs of the Public Life of Mr. James Hogg, written by himself, 1798.

must have been a king of consummate prudence and firmness, who could constrain Presbyterians and Episcopalians—the iron and the clay—to mingle in the same ecclesiastical courts; and compel the Covenanters, so jealous of the Headship of Christ, to take certain civil oaths before they could enter an Established pulpit, and be enrolled in its Assemblies.

A new style of preaching, soon after the Revolution, began to be introduced. During the bloody persecutions the clergy necessarily became very illiterate. The mode of their address was homely, bold, and rousing. They had no time for study. It was not accuracy, but pungency and impassioned oratory, which were required of a man standing upon a moss *Hag*, and calling upon his armed followers to spill the last drop of their blood for “Christ’s crown and covenant.” Their sermons were full of divisions and subdivisions, that they might crowd every thing into a single discourse, as they knew not when they might have another opportunity of addressing their people.\* The restoration of internal peace and church order paved the way for a higher style of preaching. Instead of the coarse impassioned eloquence of a hill-side, their discourses were tamed down to the suavity and cold correctness of a small country church, where their parishioners met as a large family circle.

The country had imported a Dutch king, and they also imported Dutch theology. Arminianism was then spreading in Holland. Many of the best Scotch preachers had studied there during the persecution, and had become tinged with the doctrines of this heresy, so flattering to the proud heart of man, which wishes to mingle human merit with the obedience of Jesus. These were by far the most learned and cultivated preachers. Elegance was thus unfortunately associated with defective views of salvation by grace. Error put on the appearance of an angel of light, and, under a chaste form of speech, which did not necessarily belong to it, corrupted the rising taste and genius which began to reappear in the pulpits of Scotland.

These changes were progressively going on, while Presbyterianism in England, as has been stated, was fast lapsing into Arianism. Error is infectious as a pestilence. The doctrines of the Reformation became doubly unfashionable in Edinburgh, because they were disliked in London. The complaint was wide and

\* Dr. Erskine’s Sermons, vol. i. Appendix to Dr. Roberton’s Funeral Sermon.

deep, that the Scotch nobles resorting, after the Union (1707), to the metropolis to attend the meeting of parliament, returned to scoff at religion, and spend their Sabbaths in amusements instead of attending the house of God. It was beneath the dignity of gentlemen to enter a plain Presbyterian church; and the taint of infidelity was beginning to spread among the professional and commercial ranks of society.

In the course of only twenty-six years after the Revolution, it was altogether surprising that Simson of Glasgow, and Campbell of St. Andrews, a little later, should have been found teaching Socinian and Arminian doctrines from their professorial chairs in the land of Knox and Melville, who thought they had indoctrinated the public mind with a Calvinistic creed never to be shaken. But even in religion men are, to a great extent, the children of circumstances, and pass with wondrous rapidity from one extreme to another. The tide of public opinion over Protestant Europe was now setting in against the higher Calvinistic doctrines. The Covenants had lost much of their value from being often burnt by the hands of the common hangman at the cross of Linlithgow and other towns, and their abettors being declared rebels. Their persecuting articles could not bear discussion among enlightened men. An inhabitant of Scotland, when he went into England, was ashamed to acknowledge that he had sworn to extirpate prelacy. The religion of the court was adopted by courtiers; and abhorred prelacy, with its showy ritual, became the religion of Scotch nobles, as distinguished from the people. Nevertheless, all did not learn their religion in kings' palaces. There was a strong party, both among the ministers and eldership of the Assembly, who looked back to the era of the Covenants as the very perfection of sound doctrine, Christian liberty, and freedom from all sects and parties. They had the people on their side; and being men imbued with a strong sense of religion, and valuing sound doctrine more than sweet sentences and set phrases, they compelled the new school of theology to be very circumspect in venting their speculations. As the fetters of an Establishment began gradually to pinch them; as society settled down into order; and as legal statutes, and not their own judgment, became the rule of acting, they began to fret at their felt loss of Christian freedom. The re-enactment of the old law of patronage as it existed before the Revolution, at which time it was considerably modified, though



not removed; and its firm enforcement, in some cases, by the arm of civil authority, were the first occurrences that sorely galled them, and made them feel that their church was labouring under an intolerable bondage. The "Trust Sermon," "The Marrow controversy," and the "deposition of the Seceders," were all different phases of the same dispute between the "moderate" and "highflying" parties. The one was all courtesy to the state, the other was contending for the rights and liberties of the people. The dispute had reached such a height before the famous sermon of Ebenezer Erskine, in which he attacked the opinions and practices of the opposite party, that it must soon have come to an open rupture, even though he had not been the occasion of it. A spark was sufficient to kindle the blaze.

Previous to 1732, when the rupture with Ebenezer Erskine began, the prevailing party in the church were following very arbitrary and tyrannical measures, alienating the minds of the people from its constitution, and preparing them for a revolt. The Seceders became their leaders. They gave tongue to the people's grievances. Being cast out of the church, they saw many things in a new light, and confessed that they themselves had been "dumb dogs" when within the walls of the Assembly; but now they had freedom to lift up their testimony against the erroneous doctrine, lax discipline, and tyrannical measures of an Erastian and declining church. Demands were made from every quarter for a redress of grievances. The popular voice was too loud to be resisted or hushed at once into silence.

The secession of Erskine, Fisher, Wilson, and Moncrieff, brought the Assembly, for a time, to its senses, and induced them to commence a course of reformation and of popular measures to arrest the progress of defection, and bring back the ministers and people within the pale of the Establishment. They were, no doubt, in a great measure disappointed; yet still that was their aim. In chagrin, the Rev. Mr. Lawson, Closeburn, says, in a letter which he published at the time, addressed through Mr. Wilson to the Seceders: "The Assemblies 1734, 1735, &c., agreeable to the mind of the diffusive church made known unto them, redressed a great many grievances, which you and a great many members of this church justly complained of, viz., they reversed the act 1730, anent dissents; the act 1732, anent planting of gospel ministers; they put an effectual stop to the riding committees; these had been great



ground of contention and offence: they regulated the commission of the Assembly that had been much and justly complained of; they reversed the violent settlement of Auchtermuchty, and that in the face of great opposition; by which they gave another declaration of the acts of commission being reversible when they act not according to the rules of this church, which had been much denied; they declared ministerial freedom to be as great as ever, and, in my opinion, as full as the word of God allows; they appointed Commissioners of their own number, to wait upon the king and parliament, to crave the repealing of the patronage act; this was done once and again, so that the church is not to blame if it was not got accomplished; they ordered the seceding brethren, who had been cast out, to be reponed, which was done accordingly; they, as to the matter, enacted the indulgence of such people who had ministers intruded upon them, to have word and sacrament from others, if they had not freedom to join with these ministers that had been thus settled among them; they made an excellent act anent preaching of the gospel, which is a standing evidence of the orthodoxy of this church; and, by another act, they recommended it to all church judicatories to take care that no ministers should be settled against the will of the people; and I heartily wish this act may always take effect. By all which acts a wider door was opened for the returning of the seceding brethren to the church, than when they were cast out and did secede; and, in my opinion, and in the opinion almost of every body, except yourselves and your adherents, all the causes of your secession were, as to the matter, removed; except that of reversing all the violent settlements which had been, which is altogether impracticable for us.”\*

In addition to these popular measures, the church had enjoyed the aid of Whitefield in refilling their places of worship, and stirring up a warm, healthful, and religious spirit among their adherents, so that a much better tone of feeling began again to prevail towards the church courts among the great body of the people. On no less an authority, however, than that of Sir H. Moncrieff, the Assembly never were serious in their proposals of reformation, but intended merely to blind, mollify, and win back

\* Letter from the Rev. Mr. John Lawson, Minister of the Gospel at Closeburn, to the Rev. William Wilson, one of the Ministers of the Associate Presbytery: 1741, p. 11.

the Seceders, and then to move on as heretofore. "What shows," says he, "above all the wish of the Assembly of 1736 to conciliate the spirit of the times, they passed an act in this year entitled, '*An Act against Intrusion of Ministers into vacant Congregations, and recommendations to presbyteries concerning Settlements.*' It is scarcely conceivable that this act could have done more than soothe the discontent of the people by conciliatory language, unless more could have been attempted than perhaps was practicable, and unless it had been followed up by a train of authoritative decisions, *which was far from being intended.*"\*

Several circumstances tended to bring the Church of Scotland back to her former declining position sooner than could have been expected. The rebellion of 1745 followed on the heels of the revivals of Whitefield, and the public mind became occupied with war instead of religion. Ministers became volunteers. The Seceders broke into two parties about the burgess oath, and amid their bitter and grievous contentions their cause was considered to be at an end, and all danger to the church was supposed to have passed away. Arguments were drawn from their contentions against all attempts at being righteous overmuch, and splitting hairs in theology. A horror of Seceding doctrine tended to make it still more unfashionable to preach the doctrines of original sin, or of salvation by grace, save only by implication; and it was accounted pusillanimous submission to the caprices of the people to consult them about the choice of their ministers. The Assembly became rapidly more arbitrary than ever in enforcing the settlement of the patron's presentee, in the face of all the protests of reclaiming congregations. It began to be held as a maxim, that presentations must be given effect to by the church, and the few instances in which presentees were set aside for some glaring reason, served rather to strengthen than weaken the law of patronage. The Church of Scotland rapidly settled down, after all its contendings against the state, into a submissive civil establishment, not in theory merely, but in practice; and thousands of the people, who disliked the yoke of patronage, when it was fairly bound round their necks, sought relief in voluntary dissent.

Such was the state of matters both in England and Scotland when events led to the formation of the Relief denomination. It

\* Life of Dr. Erskine. Appendix, p. 448.

was the product of the times, under the overruling providence of God. To say that it sprang from one event, or that the Christian heroism of one man gave it birth, is about as philosophical as to say that an acorn produces the oak without the soil in which to vegetate and strike its roots. Thousands were looking for another break in the Church when Gillespie was cast out, though no one, as remarked already, and as now reiterated, that it may be noted, could ever have anticipated that he, in his quiet retirement, would have been the man. The arrow directed against him as a warning to others, instead of smiting the innocent bird dead, merely cut the cord wherewith it was attached to the pole, and permitted it to rise on expanded wing to a loftier region. "Let the Lord be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant."

## CHAPTER V.

### THE CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH LED TO THE SEPARATION OF GILLESPIE FROM THE ESTABLISHMENT.

It is no easy matter to give a concise, comprehensive, and correct account of the various circumstances which combined to extrude Gillespie from the Church of Scotland. Many little matters, which had no slight degree of influence at the time, have now dropped out of sight. His own account of the matter never having been printed, but simply communicated by him in writing to President Edwards, Doddridge, and others, many interesting facts are no doubt lost, which would have thrown a flood of light upon the subject.\*

The causes which led to the deposition of Gillespie must be sought for in those church politics of the age, which have been rapidly sketched in the preceding chapter, and some parts of which now require to be more fully noticed to give any thing like meaning to the occurrences which took place in reference to his ejection. As many of the persons who have written short notices of him have belonged to rival sects and parties, according to the ordinary principles of human nature, they have either ignorantly or incautiously abused him, permitting their hatred of the denomination he had the honour to originate, strangely to distort and vilify the principles from which he acted. A surface view of the matter will neither satisfy nor answer any valuable end. The tap-root must be sought for. It can easily be traced in the surrounding soil. Gillespie had entered the Church of Scotland with delusive conceptions of its

\* A copy of the letter which Gillespie wrote to President Edwards, giving an account of his deposition, was in the hands of Dr. Stewart so late as 1798; and he promised to publish it in the Quarterly Magazine; but as the Magazine soon gave up, it was never done. After writing repeatedly both to America and London, none of Gillespie's Letters could be recovered, though it is probable they are still in existence.

independence and freedom; and when its laws, as a state church, began to be firmly enforced, and as firmly resisted by him, because contrary, in his estimation, to the word of God, and the constitution of the church of Christ, he was rudely and abruptly cast out as a rebel. He preferred deposition, with a good conscience, to the emoluments of office with a supple one. Others, who had the same views, might conform for a piece of bread. He would not.

When William and Mary, in 1688, were called to the throne of Great Britain, the principles which produced the great dissenting interests, were then clearly at work in their elementary state; succeeding occurrences merely developed them. Two years after this (1690) William sanctioned a very popular system of patronage in Scotland, because generally and vehemently demanded by the nation. He took away the right of presentation from the old patrons, as it had existed from the time of the Reformation, and even before it, and vested it in the Protestant heritors of each parish along with the elders, who were to pay the old patrons, as its price, a sum of money. These were henceforth to name the person who was to be the minister, and to propose him to the whole congregation, to be approved or disapproved of by them. If they disapproved of the presentee they were to give in their reasons to the presbytery of the bounds at whose judgment, and by whose determination, the calling and entry of every minister were to be ordered and concluded. The clergy were thus, in a great measure, vested with the patronage of all the parishes in Scotland, for the elders were all under their nomination and direction; and almost every thing about each settlement was to be cognosced and determined by the church courts.

This state of matters continued till 1712, when patronage was again restored by act of parliament under Queen Anne, and the popular act of William and Mary was fully repealed. During the twenty-two years of popular and clerical election, "great heats and divisions" were said to have taken place in different parts of Scotland. This was, to a great extent, merely a pretext for an obnoxious measure. It is understood that William parted with his kingly power over the Church of Scotland with very considerable reluctance, and that his agents went farther than he wished, though, from prudential considerations, he did not revoke their deed. The nobles also longed to have the church again under their dominion; and as very few parishes



had paid the fixed price of compensation to the old patrons, a favourable opportunity was eagerly seized by a tory ministry, with the view of crippling the power of the whigs by making the church less an organ of their popular measures, to restore patronage, and thereby to bring the church nearer to the throne, and farther from the populace, that she might yield prompter and more submissive allegiance to those who had set her up, and could put her down at pleasure. State policy, and not a few disputed calls, dictated the return to "Papal patronage," as it was scornfully designated. The enactment came upon the church like a clap of thunder. The clergymen of that period were strenuous in maintaining "the Headship of Christ," which, in their mouths, denoted that the church was superior to the state, and that they, as a corporate body, should dictate to parliament, and not parliament to them. They still grasped at the shadow of that power which they, in reality, had possessed in the times of the "Tables," when the crown was cast beneath the altar. They protested, therefore, against the measure in their church courts, and resorted to every measure which cunning and zeal could devise and execute to prevent this new enactment from being practically carried into effect. They, for a time, set the statute at defiance, and proceeded, as formerly, only to induct ministers upon a call from the people.

The government was in no haste to combat their illegal and intemperate procedure. It allowed them to vapour away for a season; but, like a giant, it kept its foot where it had placed it on the neck of the church, and trusted to time and circumstances for teaching her quiet submission. Its aim was not to choke her, but to teach her quietly to wear the yoke which it had clapped upon her restive movements. In a few years the government found itself sufficiently strong in the Assembly to give effect to presentations, and to enjoin the settlement of a presentee even in the face of a reclaiming congregation, if no charge could be substantiated against his life, doctrine, and literary qualifications. The "call," or consent of the people, which had been legally introduced by William, but which was now revoked, began to be held in very little esteem. It was still "moderated," but no one could be voted for but the Patron's presentee. The "Act of presentation" by the patron was gradually considered by the "Assembly" as the law of the land, which must be complied with, and on which the presentee must be inducted.

The mode in which the Government portion of the Assembly carried into effect unpopular settlements, by "committees," in the face of a strong clerical opposition, vigorously backed by the people, was unconstitutional and clumsy. It produced many evils. Its only plea was dire necessity. It often happened that the parish in which the settlement was to take place was within the bounds of a presbytery which was refractory. They firmly pled conscience, and the word of God, and the old constitution of the Church of Scotland, as their reasons for not obeying the injunctions of what they considered the truckling part of the Assembly. When nearly all were rebels, it was impossible for the church to act through her regular presbyterial courts, or even to punish insubordination to her enactments. In this emergency, the plan resorted to was to appoint a committee of the General Assembly to swamp the refractory presbytery, by meeting along with them on the spot, ordaining the minister, compelling them to put his name on the record, and constituting him a minister of the Church of Scotland. The first of these "riding committees," as they were afterwards ironically called, was nominated in 1729, for the purpose of effecting a very unpopular settlement in one of the parishes of Aberdeen.

This device for accomplishing unpopular settlements continued for twenty years. It preserved to appearance the authority of the church, and saved scrupulous consciences; but it fomented in a great degree the very evil it was intended to remedy. The people, instead of being awed into submission, were stung to madness, when they saw a group of strange clergy, protected by a company of soldiers, inducting a minister among them whom they abhorred, while the ministers of their own presbytery were taking no part in the service, and even indirectly fanning the flame of popular discontent. "A house divided against itself cannot stand." The evil was also aggravated by the successive Assemblies at times vacillating, as to the law of patronage being the law of the Church. A clear, firm, and somewhat rash enactment on the subject, in 1732, eventually produced the secession, led on by Ebenezer Erskine, who maintained, in opposition to the growing power of patronage, "the Divine right of the people to elect their own pastors." This was a blow at the root. The people responded to his call. The Church was stunned. They faltered for many years to cast out the Erskines, repealed their own act, and kept the Seceders suspended, like Mahomet's

coffin, between heaven and earth, to see if they would be frightened, and return with tamer spirits within the bosom of the Church. The Erskines continued to issue and re-issue their Testimonies against a declining Church; and the Church, in return, mustered courage at last to depose them altogether from their office as factious and rebellious. This laid the foundation of the Secession.

As a popular body, the General Assembly, after the lesson which they received by the loss of the Seceders, might have yielded longer and oftener to the will of the people in the settlement of ministers, had it not been for the scheme of augmenting the salaries of the clergy, on which it set its heart, and for the attainment of which it applied, in the first instance, by petition and representation to parliament. The plan was eagerly pushed forward by the "Moderate" party. It was strenuously opposed by the Scotch aristocracy. The evangelical or popular party in the Church was also averse to the measure.\* Dr. Cuming of Edinburgh, "who was at the time the ostensible leader of the Church under the Earl of Isla, who had the management of Scotch affairs," was sent, along with other commissioners, to London, in 1750, to bring the scheme of augmentation to a favourable issue. The nobles and landed proprietors, however, were not to be tamed down into meek compliance with the wishes of the clergy, when an additional burden was to be saddled on their estates. Both parties gave in their representations to a committee of the House of Commons. Evidence was led at great length on the subject. When the proposal came to be debated before the House, a paper was circulated among its members, complaining grievously that the clergy in general disobeyed the law of patronage, frequently setting aside the patron's presentee, and introducing some other person called by the people. On these facts, it was submitted to the members of the House that, if any new favours were granted to the Scotch Church, provision should at the same time be made for enforcing the law of patronage; and that it should be put out of the power of presbyteries to elude the law as they had formerly done.†

\* A Loud Cry, p. 14.

† "*Reasons for enforcing the law relating to patronages in Scotland.*—By the act made in Scotland in 1690, the presenting ministers in Scotland, was taken from the patrons, and given to the heritors and elders, subject to be cognosed on by the presbytery of the bounds; at whose judgment, and by whose determina-

This was in strict accordance with reports which had for some time before been in circulation, both in London and Edinburgh, that the petition for an augmentation of stipends, if granted, would be connected with an enactment, "binding the law of patronage more strictly upon the neck of the Church of Scotland." The House of Commons cushioned the appeal of the clergy, by refusing to take it, during that session, into their consideration, but the clergy could not but learn a lesson from what had passed, that submission to the law of patronage was expected from all those who would be fed from the king's table.\*

The Church seems to have been perfectly aware that she had been acting a very irregular and unconstitutional part, and that prompt and full submission to the law of patronage was requisite to entitle her to a fresh grant of public money. To propitiate the wrath of the patrons, and to show the government that the Church was a national Institution, regularly governed, they, at the meeting of the same Assembly (1750), in which they ap-

tion, the calling and entering of every particular minister were to be ordered and concluded.

"By the act 10 Annæ, cap. 12, it is declared, That this way of calling ministers had proved inconvenient, and had caused great heats and divisions among the heritors and elders thereby authorized to call ministers. And therefore the said act of 1690, as to this point, was thereby repealed, and the right of presentation was thereby restored to the patrons.

"It appears, however, that the presbyteries of Scotland pay very little or no regard to this law; and that, in direct disobedience to it, they frequently refuse to enter the patron's presentee; and, for the most part, moderate the call of another person named to them by the Christian people, as they are called,—the heritors, or the elders.

"It is therefore submitted, that as great part of the persons who now apply to parliament for relief, with respect to their stipends, became entitled to them in breach and opposition to a law made by the parliament of Great Britain, that, in case the wisdom of parliament shall incline to indulge the clergy with any alteration of the law as to these matters, they will at the same time make effectual provisions for enforcing a due obedience to the act of the 10th of Queen Anne, in such a manner, as that it shall not for the future be in the power of the presbyteries in Scotland to elude the same, in the manner they have hitherto done."

'N. B. The above paper is said to have been given to the members, by an unknown hand, the day before that on which the motion was to be made for taking the report under consideration.—The report is quoted likewise for proof of what is here alleged.'—*Scots Mag.*, 1751., pp. 329, 330.

\* The application to parliament, after such an ungracious reception, was fruitless. It was not till twenty years after, that the House of Lords decided that the Court of Session had power out of the free teinds, to grant augmentations of ministers' stipend. This was a side way of getting a right established, which has hitherto wrought very well for the Church.



pointed commissioners to prosecute the scheme of augmentation, also recommended it to their regular commission, "to consider of a method for securing the execution of the sentences of the Assembly" as to presentations, and in the mean time, "if any presbyteries were disobedient, and did not execute the sentences of this Assembly in the particular causes which have been determined by them, the commission are empowered to call such presbyteries before them, and censure them as they shall see cause."\* Riding committees were henceforth to cease; and presbyteries, under the threat of suspension and deposition, were to carry into effect the most unpopular settlements. These golden promises did not avail at the time with the aristocracy for a fresh amount of chalders of grain.

A casual circumstance, in this state of things, appears to have brought forward a person of no ordinary grasp of intellect, and to have given shape and severity to those measures which were to strip the Church of Scotland of her fancied independence, and to make her obedient and submissive throughout all her courts to civil authority. Dr. Patrick Cuming could not have done it. He was vain and pompous, and was considered a mere tool in the hand of government. He had the will, indeed, but he wanted the power. He attempted to keep the vessel in the right direction, but squalls and storms, while he was at the helm, often drove it out of its prescribed course. The enterprise devolved upon one who was very far his superior in talents and attainments, management and manners, and to whom belongs the notoriety of having introduced a vigorous system of government into the church, which has ever since been known by the name of "Dr. Robertson's System of Ecclesiastical Policy." It was the means of making the refractory Church of Scotland a very obedient State Church; but it also drove many from its pale, who preferred Christ, to a royal commissioner, as its head.

(The) most of annalists who have written of this period, have represented Dr. Robertson, who at the time was minister of Gladsmuir, as cogitating in his study, with the coolness of a sage, the great leading principles of his policy, and, without any stimulus save a sense of duty to the church, indoctrinating his brethren with them, and then, with all the eloquence of a Cicero, enforcing them upon the members of the Assembly hanging upon

\* Index to Acts of Assembly 1750.

his lips. But as Locke was quickened in his perceptions of religious liberty by the sharpness of his persecutions; so Robertson did not appear as the unflinching and open advocate of patronage and the power of the church, till a very near connexion of his own was roughly handled by an anti-patronage mob, and he himself was thrown into the midst of popular violence. Stirring times bring out great minds either for good or for evil.

Very great opposition, in 1750, was made to the settlement of Mr. James Syme, in Alloa, on the part of the people. The minister who came to serve his edict, was met at the end of the town by a mob, who took it from him by violence, and beat and bruised those heritors, elders, and parishioners, to the effusion of their blood, who gave countenance to the settlement. On the day which the presbytery had fixed for his ordination, they again assembled, “rung the bell from morning till evening, and in the afternoon displayed a flag from the steeple in token of victory, none offering to oppose them.” But the Church was not thus to be thwarted in executing her decisions. To prevent the recurrence of such scenes, four companies of soldiers were stationed in the town before the second day appointed for his ordination arrived. This strong measure overawed the multitude. The settlement was effected without any disturbance, by a “riding committee” of the Assembly; and among those present was “the Rev. William Robertson, of Gladsmuir.” Several of the parishioners of Alloa were soon after tried for their riotous proceedings before the court of justiciary,—convicted, fined, banished, or imprisoned, according to their criminality. One woman, “Jean Nicol, was ordained to pass through Edinburgh on the 29th of January, her hands tied behind her back with a rope, the hangman walking immediately behind her, holding the end of the rope in one hand and his whip in the other; and thereafter she was to be confined to the Edinburgh correction house, at hard labour, till the 15th of May.” These were very disagreeable and untoward circumstances to all who were involved in them. *Not a solitary individual of the Stirling Presbytery attended.* All the services were conducted by strangers. Dr. Robertson appears to have been there as the personal friend of Mr. Syme, who, in a few months afterwards, married one of his sisters.\*

\* “Mr. Syme married a sister of Principal Robertson, (a woman of a very superior mind,)—and their only daughter, Eleanora, became the mother of one of the most remarkable men of the present day—having married, on the 25th May, 1778,

Such scenes as this opened the eyes of the moderate clergy to the evils which sprang from allowing presbyteries to become refractory in obeying the statute law of the church, and a much less ardent mind than Dr. Robertson's, when relatives became involved, would have sought, by some means or other, to obviate or root out the cancerous evil. The way was already chalked out by the Assembly. It required merely a vigorous mind to press its firm and universal adoption. Besides, he was an avowed favourer of arbitrary, or what he would have called constitutional, measures; and it was not long before an opportunity offered of his wielding the powers of the church against those who were recusants to her authority. He did not fail to improve it. He became the champion of the state controlling the church in practice, as it already did in theory; and of introducing the prompt obedience of the army into every established church-court throughout the land. Scrupulous consciences he compelled either to yield or resign their situations upon the Establishment.

When the General Assembly met in May, 1751, the case of the parish of Torphichen came before them. The presbytery of Linlithgow had twice refused to induct Mr Watson into the parish, though enjoined by two preceding Assemblies. They rested their defence on the grounds that there was a strong opposition to the settlement in the parish; that the flame, if they took an active hand in the ordination, would spread to their own congregations; and that their usefulness as ministers would be thereby in a great measure destroyed. They deprecated any infliction of ecclesiastical censures upon them for their refusing to obey the injunctions of the Assembly, as they were acting according to the dictates of their conscience, of which Jesus was Lord; and that the decisions of no church-court ought to be *arbitrary*, but that every minister should be left to judge for himself how far, in consistency with the word of God, he could yield obedience to his ecclesiastical superiors.\* This they maintained was agreeable to Presbyterian government and the constitution of the Church of Scotland. "If private judgment," said one of their number at the bar of the Assembly, "has any rights left under our Establishment, the first and most essential is the right to de-

Henry Brougham, Esq. younger, of Brougham-Hall—the father of *Lord Brougham*, who was born in Edinburgh in 1779."—*Morren's Annals*, p. 186.

\* Antipatronage Report. Appendix, pp. 39—46.

termine what is a matter of conscience, and what not, in relation to one's personal conduct. Withdraw this right, and all goes along with it."\* Submission to ecclesiastical courts enforced by threatenings, censures, forfeitures, and all the terrible engines of power, they considered as the greatest spiritual tyranny in the free Church of Scotland.

These were bold, and literally Independent rather than Presbyterian, principles. They were such, however, as the Church of Scotland had acted upon during her struggle with Episcopacy when she was independent of the State. Were they such, however, as became her when she was under law to Cæsar? In this lay the discrepancy which many of her best children could not perceive. But those who had studied what was implied in the connection between Church and State, saw the incompatibility of such claims with their present condition, and insisted upon absolute obedience to the absolute injunctions of the legal Establishment. Accordingly, Home of Athelstaneford, (the author of 'Douglas,') and Dr. Robertson, came forward as the abettors of the power of the church to compel submission, or inflict exclusion from the benefits of the Establishment. They both spoke for the first time in this Assembly. Dr. Robertson especially, fresh as he was from the disturbances in Alloa, where, no doubt, he had got much practical light, strenuously urged the necessity of bringing more decisive measures to bear against these growing disorders, and "of maintaining the authority of the church by enforcing the submission of all its members." "He unfolded the general principle of his ecclesiastical government,—the subordination of judicatories,"† which, next year, he pressed with still greater vigour, and inflicted exclusion and deposition upon Gillespie. It is here where the origin of Gillespie's ejection from the Church of Scotland must be sought, and unless traced up to this source it can never be properly understood.

In the Torphichen case just noticed, Home and Robertson were partly successful, and partly their prey escaped out of their hands. Their aim was to get the Linlithgow presbytery "censured," and "suspended" from the office of the ministry, as a warning to all other refractory members who should plead conscience for not obeying the injunctions of the Assembly. They managed to get them censured; but the Assembly, though keenly

\* Scots Mag., 1752., p. 139.

† Stewart's Life of Robertson, p. 111.



urged to it by Robertson, refused, by a great majority of votes, to suspend them. Even the vote of "censure" was considered by many a measure of extreme severity. And against this Principal Wishart and twenty-four others dissented, and gave in their "reasons" of dissent. They maintained that no Assembly of *fallible* men had a right to inflict church censures upon those who declared they had a conscientious regard to the mind of Christ. It was subversive of the rights of conscience, and derogatory to the authority of Jesus, who was Lord of the conscience. Their being an Establishment did not trench upon the inalienable right of private judgment. And farther, that their subscription and submission to the judicatories was with the express condition of its being *in the Lord*; and that they were to judge for themselves in this matter, as each was answerable for himself *to the Lord*. The responsibility was personal, and such was the obligation of obedience under which they had come. The "reasons" will be found in the Appendix; and they are important, as they were afterwards repeatedly referred to in the papers presented to the Assembly in Gillespie's case; and as being a succinct statement of the views which at that period prevailed among the popular party in the church. For his firm and conscientious adherence to which, the founder and father of the Relief church was "deposed."

The Torphichen settlement was carried into effect by a "riding committee;" and Robertson, who was now a rising star, whom the moderate party marked out as their own, was appointed to preach and preside. It was the last riding committee ever appointed; and the future leader of the Assembly had the notoriety of leading the forlorn hope, in the last assault against the power of refractory presbyteries casting their shield over the liberties of the people. They were levelled to the dust. But though cast down, they were not destroyed. Some of them soon appeared clad in spiritual armour, having thrown away all carnal weapons, and ranged themselves under the banner of him who says, "My kingdom is not of this world."

## CHAPTER VI.

### GILLESPIE'S DEPOSITION.

THE general impression of the religious public is, that Gillespie was deposed by the Church of Scotland because he was opposed to patronage. This is true, but it is not all the truth. The great principle, partially developed towards the close of the last chapter, was the real matter of dispute. The presbytery of Dunfermline strenuously contended, along with many others, that the members of inferior church judicatories were not bound to give effect to the sentences of superior ecclesiastical courts, when they were persuaded in their own minds that these sentences were contrary to the word of God. They pled for a state of things which left ministers a great deal of ministerial freedom, and which made church courts rather consultative meetings than legislative and executive assemblies. Much of this liberty belonged to the old Church of Scotland at the time when she was dissociated from the state,—when her assemblies and presbyteries were proscribed, and congregations supported their own ordinances, and managed their own affairs. For one voluntary church to intrude a minister upon another would have been most preposterous. No court on earth, it was held, could compel an inferior court to ordain an obnoxious presentee, when they were convinced it would be a sin. The settlement of Mr. Richardson at Inverkeithing was known to be most offensive to the people, and, in the sight of God, the Dunfermline presbytery could not carry his induction into effect. Opposition to patronage was thus merely a branch springing from a great general principle. Liberty of conscience was felt to be at stake, and Gillespie was resolved at all hazards to stand fast in that liberty wherewith Christ, he thought, had made his people free.

Such views, however, were directly opposed to those of Dr. Robertson and his friends, who were resolved that the Church of

Scotland, like every other legal institution, should hear the mandates of power from her supreme Assembly, and yield to them prompt and universal obedience. Into all the ramifications of the Church he wished to introduce the discipline of the army, and that subalterns should not reason, but do, at once, as they were enjoined. This plan of ecclesiastical government was plainly mooted in the Torphichen case; and the Inverkeithing settlement, which at the time was depending before the church courts, kept the discussion alive, and brought it speedily to an issue.

Mr. Andrew Richardson, minister of the parish of Broughton, presbytery of Biggar, was presented in 1749 to the parish of Inverkeithing, by the patron, Captain Philip, Anstruther; which presentation he accepted, and the patron of course requested the presbytery of Dunfermline, to which Inverkeithing belonged, to take the necessary steps for his translation and induction. A call was moderated. The adherents were very few,—mostly non-resident heritors. The people had set their affections upon Mr. William Adam, minister of a dissenting congregation at Painswick, England. For him they moderated a kind of irregular call among themselves, laid it upon the table of the presbytery, and insisted upon its prosecution. The two calls can scarcely, however, be regarded as “competing calls;” for the latter was certainly irregular, and seems never to have had any weight attached to it.

The majority of the presbytery, after examining carefully into the case, by sending a deputation of their number to Inverkeithing narrowly to sift the matter on the spot, refused to have any active hand in carrying the settlement into effect, as the people at large were very strongly opposed to it. All the elders except one refused to submit to the ministry of Mr. Richardson. The general interests of religion, within the parish and within the whole bounds of the presbytery, were in danger of being greatly injured. The cause was carried by appeals before the synod of Fife and the commission of the Assembly, (1750,) which enjoined the presbytery of Dunfermline to proceed forthwith to the admission and settlement of Mr. Richardson at Inverkeithing. It was the firm refusal of the presbytery to proceed to the induction of the presentee, notwithstanding the injunction of the commission, that brought the question again into discussion, whether inferior judicatories were bound, contrary to their conscience, to carry into

effect the sentences of superior courts. The patron, and the callers of Mr. Richardson, maintained that they were, and that the lower church courts refusing to obey the sentences of the higher, was destructive of all government, particularly Presbyterian government, which consisted in the parity of pastors and subordination of church judicatories; and farther, that a refusal to induct would disturb the peace of the parish and the country at large. They also pinched the recusant presbytery by reminding them that every minister, at the period of his admission into the Church, was bound, by the sacred tie of an oath, to obey the lawful sentences of the superior judicatories; and that their refractoriness proceeded from the contemptible fear of losing some of their hearers. They jeered them as being "people ridden."

In answer to these things, the majority of the presbytery solemnly affirmed that they had laboured to disabuse themselves of all mistakes and ill-grounded scruples, and still that they found such difficulties remaining that they could not actively proceed with the settlement. They held that there were few maxims plainer, in the whole system of natural and revealed religion, than that every man has a right to judge for himself in the regulation of his conduct; that no man can give a blind and implicit obedience safely to the decisions of any body of men, however venerable their authority; and that every man must be determined by his own sentiments, after a full and impartial inquiry. "All sober-minded Protestants," said they, "who have thought on these matters, are agreed that this right of private judgment is inalienable. It could not be renounced by ten thousand oaths, and they had never renounced it; for in their ordination vow there was an express qualification, they vowed submission *in the Lord*; and this was well known to all." They did not deny that the sentences of courts of the last resort must take effect, and that, consequently, the admission of Mr. Richardson, in virtue of the sentence of the commission, must now be consummated; but there were other ways of doing this than by disannulling the right of private judgment, and compelling men to do it contrary to their conscience. While they rejected the doctrine of "implicit obedience to the sentences of superiors" as being neither constitutional, nor necessary for the government of the Church, they equally repudiated the charge of being blindly led by their people. At the same time, they said, smoothly but cuttingly, "We think it expedient to lead them softly, quite



agreeably to the temper and practice of the apostles, and the greatest of them, in whom it was not meanness of spirit, but the natural effect of that true greatness of mind and goodness of heart which his deep conceptions of God, and the sublime spirit of the gospel, inspired, to be gentle to all men, and in lesser things to exercise forbearance towards the brethren, as a rule of prudence necessary for the more extensive success of the gospel.”\*

There were also some matters of lesser moment which set the majority of the presbytery a little on edge. Their superiors had so far intermeddled in the affair as to get the pastoral relation between Mr. Richardson and his parish dissolved without their concurrence; and since they had taken one active step in the matter, the presbytery thought they should take the remainder and complete the induction. They would not finish a disagreeable business which others had begun. If there was honour or disgrace in it, let it be all their own. The commission had carried into effect many such settlements throughout the country during the last twenty years, by a committee of their number; and why stop short now, and single them out, and compel them to do what they believed to be a sin?

It was in these circumstances that the cause came again before the commission in March, 1752. It had been twice there before; and, on the last occasion, (November 1751,) the Dunfermline presbytery had been enjoined to admit Mr. Richardson to Inverkeithing, with certification that, if they did not execute the sentence, the commission would proceed against them to a very high censure. They thus came before the commission judicially condemned. Their conscience, however, did not condemn them. They were grave and pious men, acting according to the word of God, and afraid to do aught injurious to the interests of religion. They pled before the commission that the authority of the supreme court could effect the settlement without them. As inferiors, they acknowledged they had no right to oppose it; but neither was it right to force them to execute it when it was contrary to their conscience, and when they were convinced, after weighing the matter most seriously, that it would mar the success of the gospel in their bounds. As honest men, they assured the commission they could not

\* Appendix to Antipatronage Report, ‘Inverkeithing Settlement.’

support themselves with the reflection that they had merely acted in obedience to their superiors, and that therefore it was the deed of their superiors and not theirs. This distinction could not weigh with them in the determination of their conduct. The authority of man could not supersede the authority of God. Sin was still sin.

The commission felt the power of their appeal. They abrogated the sentence of censure passed in the way of threat by a former commission; and, to harmonize the authority of the church and the conscience of the Dunfermline presbytery, they relieved them altogether of the matter, and enjoined the synod of Fife as *their committee* to complete the settlement. This was a somewhat dexterous expedient in pinching circumstances. It preserved intact the authority of the Assembly, it secured the admission of the presentee, and it saved the presbytery from acting contrary to their convictions. The rights of the Christian people, however, were to be sacrificed. The patron's power was to be silently acquiesced in as supreme. The moderate party should have been satisfied with these things. At every fresh settlement they were abridging the power of the people. The last shreds of it were all but annihilated. An over-anxiety, however, to draw the struggling fish ashore before it is all but dead, often snaps the line, and gives the fish again to the open stream. Dr. Robertson and his friends were resolved to carry the *principle of passive obedience in church courts*, as well as to effect the Inverkeithing settlement; and therefore they protested and appealed to the Assembly; and thus the great question of implicit obedience came to be wrought up with Gillespie's deposition. There was only one minister above ten years' standing who signed the Protest. It was no longer the mere settlement of Richardson, but a great constitutional principle, which was felt by both parties in the church to be at stake. Men of the greatest talent engaged in the contest. The struggle was kept up for several years; and ultimately a party, as will yet appear, was raised up in Providence unshackled by the state, who held the great principles of forbearance in lesser matters, and the Divine right of the Christian people to elect their own office-bearers.

Things now began seriously to threaten an approaching contest which would shake the Church of Scotland to its foundation, and consolidate the power of the section which was successful

in the struggle. Reasons of Dissent from the judgment of the commission resolving to inflict no censure on the presbytery of Dunfermline for their disobedience in relation to the settlement of Inverkeithing, were drawn up by Dr. Robertson, and subscribed by Dr. Blair, Mr. Home, and others. It was the work of six weeks, and every word is said to have been balanced with the utmost care. They were not men who would allow a slovenly document to pass out of their hands. These “Reasons” were answered by the commission in a paper of considerable length, which is understood to have been mainly drawn up by Dr. Webster. The two papers published at the time in the Scots Magazine, contain the most authentic documents extant of the general principles of the two great parties into which the church was then divided.\*

The moderate party, who were the dissenters from the sentence of the commission, argued “that, according to the first principles of all society, when a public regulation is once enacted, it is absolute; and the right of private judgment is so far superseded, that even those who disapprove of it are bound *to obey it*, and *put it in execution* if required, unless it be such a gross violation of the original design of the society as will justify a man to resist the supreme power and seek the dissolution of the society. Farther, that a church, even as a society of fallible men, has a right to judge for itself what method of external administration is right; and that, though inferiors disapproved of a judgment given by a superior court, yet they were bound to put that judgment into execution as the deed of their superiors, *for conscience’ sake*, in order to support the authority of the church to which they belonged. If they were not prepared to execute the judgment of superior courts differing from their own private judgment, they should not have joined themselves to any church till they had found out an assembly of *infallible* men; and that, if they had joined a fallible church, and yet could not conscientiously execute its sentences, they were bound, as honest men, to withdraw. Again, that Presbyterian church government is distinguished by two capital things—parity of ministers and subordination of church courts; that it is essential to the very idea of a supreme judicature that its sentences be absolute and final; that such a

\* Morren’s Annals. Stewart’s Life of Robertson. Cook’s Life of Hill. Scots Mag., 1752. The papers themselves, called the Manifestoes of the two parties, will be found in the Appendix.

supreme judicature was the General Assembly; and, that disputing or disobeying its judgments by inferior courts was overturning the Presbyterian constitution and setting up English Independency, ‘falsely called liberty of conscience.’” Besides some other reasons of a technical kind, they also asserted that, according to the principles on which the sentence of the commission was founded, “a minister may espouse and publish the most wild, erroneous, and hurtful opinions; and he has only to declare that it was a conscientious regard to the will of Christ himself, according to the best of his judgment, that led him to their adoption; that he has an unalienable right of private judgment, as he shall answer to the Lord; and no church court can inflict censure upon him.”

The answers which were drawn up by the popular party to these reasons of dissent, have upon them the stamp of a vigorous and very acute mind. The general principles laid down as to society are acknowledged in the main to be correct; while yet it is shown that their spirit requires an absolute and blind obedience, which is altogether inconsistent with liberty of conscience, reason, and the word of God. It is answered first, that it is not true that in civil society a subject must either actively obey, or, by resistance to the supreme power, seek the dissolution of the government; for he may passively submit to the punishments which his sovereign may please to inflict for disobedience, and still continue a member of the society, and claim its privileges and immunities. The commands of authority will never, it is held, be an excuse for an action, if that action is sinful; and the Confession of Faith lays it down as a maxim (chap. xx., sect. 2), “That the requiring of an *absolute* and *blind* obedience is to destroy liberty of conscience and reason itself.” Farther, they acknowledge, that while church censures are to be inflicted by fallible men upon those who are guilty of transgressing the *laws of Christ*, yet they take an important distinction between the Church of Scotland as a church of Christ, and the Church of Scotland as an Establishment, and maintain that as a civil Establishment, she can inflict no church censures upon those who refuse to obey her laws as an Establishment. Instead of contending for the scriptural nature of an Establishment, they maintain, that when civil government annexed civil emoluments to the office of the ministry on certain terms, and the judicatures of the church were intrusted with judging who



came up to those terms, and who came short of them, the ministers were not then acting in such cases as ministers under Christ, but as trustees of the public; and for any person to disobey them as trustees, while yet in that capacity they were acting in disobedience to the commands of Christ, was not censurable with ecclesiastical censures. In the present case the disobedience was about a mere civil enactment,—patronage, and not a church matter at all. Farther, they were not only acting as mere trustees for the public, but they were also fallible men. It had, indeed, been said that the ministers of the Dunfermline presbytery should not have joined themselves to any church till they had found out an assembly of *infallible* men; but they had joined themselves to a fallible church, honestly professing to be so, and little expecting that afterwards it should plead for an *unreserved* and *active* obedience to all its injunctions, as if it were infallible. This was Popery. Again, they argue that, according to the Presbyterian form of church-government, the General Assembly is the supreme court, and its judgments must be absolute and final; yet, as it is the last court of appeal, and its judgments must take effect, it is also the *supreme executive* court, and, in particular circumstances, can take the carrying of its sentences into its own hands, and order them either by presbyteries, or by committees, or otherwise, so as to save tender consciences. For the Assembly to require of its members active obedience contrary to what they believed to be the mind of Christ, savoured of pretensions to infallibility, and was not consistent with their own standards, “that all synods or councils, since the apostles’ times, whether general or particular, may err, and many had erred, therefore they are not to be made the rule or practice, but to be used as an help to both.”\* Finally, they urge that there is no danger of their principles warranting the espousing and publishing of the most wild and erroneous opinions without censure, because they plead for lenity only to the *transgressions of the commandments of men*, and not for lenity towards the *transgressors of the laws of Christ*. This is the distinction on which their whole pleading turns. All the laws of the church about patronage, presentations, and stipends, they hold to be human; and no man is to be *ecclesiastically* punished with the censures of Jesus for not

\* West. Conf., chap. xxxi., sect. 4.

actively obeying them, otherwise it would be an impious prostitution of the discipline of the New Testament.

The most constitutional way, they readily acknowledge, for the supreme judicature to execute its sentences, is by its inferior courts. Passing over the presbytery, and appointing others to do the work, may show that the Assembly, like all other human institutions, has its infirmities, yet it is not to be put in the balance with either depriving valuable and useful men of their charges, and the church of their usefulness, or laying hard temptations before men to violate and debauch their consciences,—the very worst purposes that either power or authority can be applied to.

In examining carefully these two documents, which have been called “the manifestoes” of the moderate and popular party, it is evident that the turning point of the controversy was the relative estimation in which they held the civil Establishment of the church. The Moderate party considered that the church should be a government institution, which should be under arbitrary authority, and yield prompt and passive obedience like the different corps of an army, and that church censures should tame all recusants to the decrees of that Assembly in which royalty presided, and where the crown overshadowed the moderator’s chair; whereas, the popular party held the adventitious circumstances of the church being established and endowed cheap indeed; and that its pastors, in all their decisions about inducting ministers according to the law of the land, were merely civil functionaries, and that it was a prostitution of the discipline of Christ’s house to *censure* any minister ecclesiastically, for what was at most a mere political offence. They were so far from considering a civil Establishment as being required under the gospel, that they held it was an abuse of Christian discipline to employ church censures for its support.

It is a remarkable fact, that in neither of these papers is there any decided reference to the law of Christ upon the point at issue. The Confession of Faith and Acts of Assembly are quoted; but the popular party strangely forgot to fortify their pleadings for liberty of conscience in external matters, by appealing to the practice of the apostolic churches, in which every one was allowed to do that which was right in his own eyes about meats and drinks, and outward observances, if he held the great essential truths of Christianity. Compulsion in lesser

things was unknown. Every man was to be fully persuaded in his own mind, and if there were differences of opinion about secondary matters, still they were to forbear with each other, as members of the same church, and disciples of the same Master. "Let us, therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded; and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing."\* This overlook was the more inexcusable, as the Confession—which is the law of the church—says nothing about an Establishment of religion, nor how it is to be sustained by church censures, while, in its principles of free communion, it evidently presupposes Christians to differ in lesser matters. Where the Confession is silent as to the mind of the church about the tenor of scripture, the appeal should have been direct to the word of God.

The Moderates prepared for the approaching struggle in the ensuing Assembly, with great circumspection and care, and employed every agency which they thought would secure their triumph, and impose absolute obedience upon every member of the church. The matter of contest was in some respects of the same kind as that which originated the Secession. If carried, it was, however, as to tender consciences, to be far more oppressive. Then it was contended that no man in his ministrations should be at liberty in the pulpit to denounce the decisions and corruptions of the church; but now, every minister was to be compelled to execute, even contrary to his conscience, every decree of the Assembly, whatever was its unconstitutional character, and whether it was founded on the mere laws of man, or upon the laws of Christ. The strict discipline of the army was to be introduced into the house of God, where liberty of private judgment is indispensable, and enters to a certain extent into the very nature of church-fellowship.

The friends of absolute obedience, being fully aware of the importance of the contest, resorted to very cautious and vigorous measures to secure their end, and regain the ground which they had unexpectedly lost in the commission. To pre-occupy public favour, their reasons of dissent, instead of being quietly carried up and laid on the Assembly's table, were published in the Scots Magazine for April, so that they were generally cir-

\* Phil. iii. 15, 16.

culated before the meeting of the Assembly, and yet their opponents had not the means of meeting them in public with their answers. Their manifesto did not and could not appear in the same popular periodical till after the meeting of the Assembly. The cause was then terminated. Care was also taken to get a great number of the moderate party returned as representatives, and thus to secure a powerful majority.\*

As much depends upon the chairman for guiding a debate, and as few members, unless called upon, then ventured to address the house, they took care to get a moderator elected, who was not only favourable to their views, but who would give weight to their decision. The Rev. Patrick Cuming, Professor of Church History, Edinburgh, the leader of the moderate party, who had the support of government, and who was acknowledged to be its mouth, was exalted to the office. He had been moderator in 1749; but as an onslaught was to be made on the liberties of the church, and strong opposition was expected, he, in the most barefaced and anomalous manner, was again placed in the chair of the Assembly, that all might see what the Earl of Isla, who had the management of Scotch affairs, and who employed Cuming as his tool, had his heart set upon accomplishing. The other government officers also lent their aid. - The Earl of Leven was that year the royal commissioner to the Assembly. He was a bold outspoken man, who was *accustomed* in his opening speeches to tell the Assembly what he wished them to do. He did not whisper by his clerks in committee-rooms what the government expected of the church, but he honestly and openly told them from the throne what was their duty as an Established church. On the present occasion he charged them more directly than ever a judge did a jury, as to the proper line of their procedure, and no one protested against his language as being destructive of their independence as an Ecclesiastical court. "The main intention," said he, "of your meeting is frustrated, if your judgments and decisions are not held to be final; if inferior courts continue to assume that liberty they have taken upon themselves, in too many instances, of disputing and disobeying the decisions of their

\* The Moderator of the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale, Gibert Hamilton of Cramond, preached and published a Sermon, 5th May, in which he pointedly calls upon the rulers of the church "to exercise their authority against those who bid defiance to its judicature, lest they should be hardened in their lawless contumacy." This was whetting the sword for the battle. Pp. 17 and 31.



superiors, it is now more than high time to think of putting a stop to this growing evil; otherwise, such anarchy and confusion will be introduced into the church as will inevitably not only break us into pieces among ourselves, but make us likewise the scorn and derision of our enemies.”\* Nay, he even went a step farther, and told them that they were so to punish the delinquents, as “effectually to restrain others from following their unjustifiable example.” The Lord Advocate, William Grant, afterwards Lord Prestongrange, who had formerly been Procurator and principal Clerk of the Church, lent his influence also to the moderate party, and openly avowed in the Assembly, “that they would enlighten the consciences of some ministers through their stipends.”† Every kind of political influence and of ecclesiastical power were thus combined and made to bear upon the Dunfermline presbytery, and long before the Inverkeithing case came on, the line of procedure was chalked out, and it was resolved that they should have a heavy sentence inflicted upon them, that others “seeing might fear.”

The affair of Inverkeithing was taken up on Monday, 18th of May. The matter was very hurriedly proceeded in. Dr. Robertson opened the debate, in a speech which was an echo of “the Reasons of Dissent,” and which his friends have lauded as being argumentative and convincing, and which made a deep impression on the Assembly. He was seconded by Mr. Home, the Author of *Douglas*; so that the champions of implicit obedience on the part of the inferior judicatures, were still the same as last year in the case of Torphichen, only he who formerly wielded the sword now carried the shield, and certainly it was a more befitting situation for him. The commission were also heard in vindication of the sentence, by which they had refused to censure the Dunfermline presbytery, and appointed the Synod of Fife to complete Mr. Richardson’s induction. The mind of the Assembly was made up. It had no patience. It was so niggardly of its time that it did not allow the Reasons of Dissent‡ to be read, and of course it consigned also, in this way, the long pungent answers by Webster, which had been prepared thereto, to a silent grave. This was anything but an injury to Dr. Robertson and his friends, as their paper had been printed in the most widely circulated periodical of the day; but it was a serious evil to

\* Scots Mag., May, 1752.

† A Loud Cry, p. 24.

‡ Review of the Constitution of the Church of Scotland, p. 11.

the popular party, that their document was not allowed to see the light, and disabuse the minds of many of false and erroneous impressions. The Assembly without a vote condemned the conduct of the commission. This was the first feather plucked from the popular party. Dr. Robertson now saw his principles clearly in the ascendant. Gillespie was a member of the Assembly,\* and must have seen that sad havoc was about to be made of the conscientious scruples of the Dunfermline presbytery. He was not left long in doubt.

The Assembly instantly proceeded to appoint the Presbytery of Dunfermline to meet at Inverkeithing, on the Thursday of that same week, for the admission of Mr. Richardson, ordered all the ministers to attend, appointed *five* ministers a *quorum* to execute the appointment, and required every member of the presbytery to appear at the bar of the Assembly on Friday, at twelve o'clock, and give an account of his conduct. This was a peremptory and sweeping motion, and it was carried by 102 votes to 56. The temper of the House was apparent. They were resolved either to see their sentence obtemperated, or to punish the "rebellious" presbytery on the spot. There was to be no more dallying and pleading of conscience. Messengers had to leave summons at the dwellings of the ministers, but they hastened and pressed on at the Assembly's commandment.

The most stringent part of the sentence was its fixing *five* ministers as a quorum. Three is the usual number; but, in this instance, they insisted on a "rigour beyond the law;" and the motive was too apparent not to be visible. Three members of presbytery were willing to induct Mr. Richardson, and, had the appointment run in the usual form, they would have executed the appointment, the others would have absented themselves, and the presbytery would have escaped censure. Mr. Richardson would thus have slipped quietly into his benefice. The recusants, however, would not have been reached; and therefore the Assembly made a long arm, and so constructed their sentence, that either some of them must bend to the authority of the court, or the induction could not take place. By summoning the whole of them back to the bar of the Assembly, on Friday, to account for their conduct, they secured to themselves the opportunity of sifting them, rebuking them, or instantly deposing them. If

\* Minutes of the Assembly, 1752.

they did not yield, they compelled them to come in with the weapons of rebellion in their hands, and to abide the consequences.

From this sentence a great number of members dissented, as making a very material alteration in the constitution of the Church; according to which, *three* ministers were sufficient for constituting a presbytery, as bringing the members of the presbytery of Dunfermline, who had openly declared they could not with a good conscience concur in the settlement, under the unhappy necessity of disobeying an express appointment of the Assembly, and as preventing the admission of Mr. Richardson, seeing there were three ministers who were ready to admit him, or he could have been admitted, as in former cases, by a committee of the Assembly, without bearing hard upon the consciences of any. The extending of the quorum to five they state with pungency—and its truth is its pungency—“shows, by the by, that the interest of Mr. Richardson was but a small part of the plan.”\* The sharpest darts, however, were now counted by the moderate party as stubble. They felt themselves completely mailed, and having the power, they were resolved at all hazards to crush the popular agitators, and teach them that they must be submissive to those in authority.

The Dunfermline presbytery was called upon Friday. As might have been expected, there had been no meeting of presbytery, and Mr. Richardson had not been inducted. Three of the members of presbytery, Messrs. Liston, Aberdour—Bathgate, Dalgetty—Thomson, Dunfermline, had been at Inverkeithing on Thursday, caused the bell to be rung, went to church, waited from 11 o'clock, A.M., till 2, P.M.; but could not proceed to execute the appointment of the Assembly, as there were only three of them. They were not a quorum. Messrs. Stark, Torryburn, and Stark, Kinross, had also been at Inverkeithing on Thursday; but they had taken care to keep out of the way of the other three brethren; and as they found the people in a state of great excitement, they did not venture to take any hand in the settlement.†

\* A Letter from a Gentleman in Town to his Friend in the Country; containing a copy of some authentic Papers relative to the conduct of the Presbytery of Dunfermline, in the affair of the Settlement of Inverkeithing.—P. 4, 1752.

† In a pamphlet published in 1753, titled, ‘A Just View of the Constitution of the Church of Scotland,’ &c.; and attributed to Hyndman of the West Kirk, and which is quoted at large in the Scots Mag., Feb. 1753, p. 87, it is said, “When

Before the bar of the Assembly Stark of Kinross submitted to the authority of court. "As he was sensible of the straits of his brethren, and of the bad effects of disobeying the authority of the church, he was willing to expose himself to all hazards, and concur with the other three brethren who had shown their readiness in obeying the Assembly's appointment, in case

the Assembly laid their express commands upon the presbytery of Dunfermline to admit Mr. Richardson on the Thursday during the time of their sitting, one of the members of that presbytery, who had been averse to that settlement, went to Inverkeithing upon the Wednesday. He took occasion to converse with several of the people in the opposition; and particularly with two women, who it seems have a considerable influence in the place. He represented to them the strait into which the presbytery was brought, the danger of disobedience, and how becoming a thing it would be in the people to signify their concurrence, that so the presbytery might proceed, and meet with no farther trouble in that affair. His arguments had great weight with many; some of the elders seemed disposed to yield; and there was great hope, that, at a meeting they had appointed next morning, all things would have been made easy. Another member of the presbytery went also on the Thursday morning to Inverkeithing with the same good intention. But, alas! their endeavours were rendered abortive. Some men of a more turbulent and factious temper, than either the presbytery, or the people of Inverkeithing, had interested themselves in this matter. Accordingly, early on the Thursday, one P——r, a p——r, arrived from Edinburgh, despatched, as is alleged, by Mr. W——r; and, introducing himself to several of the people of Inverkeithing, particularly to the two women above mentioned, he gave them the most positive assurances, that the members of Assembly were greatly cooled in that affair; that if the presbytery would stand out, not a hair of their heads would be touched; and that it would argue great meanness of spirit in them to comply. He was but too successful in his negotiations; the people greedily swallowed any thing that tended to humour them in their prejudices: and thus, by this emissary, all the good endeavours of the two ministers were defeated; which, if they had succeeded, would have left the Church of Scotland, the presbytery of Dunfermline, and the people of Inverkeithing, in peace, and have prevented all the disagreeable, but necessary consequences which followed." It was this pamphlet which provoked Dr. Witherspoon to publish his 'Ecclesiastical Characteristics.' In his Speech in the Synod of Glasgow, as to his being the author of this pamphlet, he acknowledges that his friend, Dr. Webster, Edinburgh, is the person referred to in Hyndman's pamphlet. In an Answer published to 'the Just View,' under the title of 'A Review of the Constitution of the Church of Scotland,' p. 10, a flat contradiction to the whole story is given: "I have nothing to do with your secret history in your 32d page and seq. If such a shameful scene was acted as you represent it, and that you can prove it; how can you answer for it, that you do not bring the actors to deserved punishment? And if you cannot prove it, you ought not to publish it to the world, and thereby lay yourself open to the charge of calumny. Those whom many suppose to be meant, strongly aver that, if indeed it is meant of them, it is an utter falsehood." In a case agitating the whole length and breadth of Scotland, it would indeed have been singular if no one had left Edinburgh for Inverkeithing; but they might not have gone there as the messengers of Dr. Webster.



it should be thought proper to renew it.”\* Pretty language to use about ordaining a minister! Six of the members of presbytery, with the terrors of deposition before them, still refused to take any active hand in the settlement, and gave in a humble representation to the Assembly, stating their difficulties, the grounds on which they were acting, and declaring, that, “as honest men, they were willing to forego every secular advantage for the sake of a good conscience.” The document throughout is respectful, unimpassioned, and firm.

“Unto the very Reverend, the Moderator, and the Reverend and Honourable Members of the Venerable Assembly of the Church of Scotland, met at Edinburgh, May, 1752,—the humble Representation of the Ministers of the Presbytery of Dunfermline, whose names are hereunto subjoined.

“We cannot but be deeply affected with our present situation, in being obliged to stand at the bar of this venerable Assembly, to answer for non-compliance with any of their appointments.

“But as this venerable court is so good as to allow us to speak in our own behalf, we shall, therefore, beg leave humbly to represent some of those things which have all along straitened us in the execution of the orders we received, and which still lay such difficulties in our way as we are not able to surmount: and this we hope to do with that plainness and honesty, and, at the same time, with that decent and dutiful respect to the supreme judicatory of this church, which it is so justly entitled to expect from us.

“We need scarce observe how unjustly we have been represented, as having no other difficulty but the unreasonable fear of opposing the ill-grounded prejudices of our people.

“Nor need we inform this house, that ever since the act restoring patronages in the end of Queen Anne’s reign, there has been a vehement opposition to all settlements by presentations, where there was but small concurrence,† which settlements have already produced a train of the most unhappy consequences, greatly affecting the interest of religion; and if turned into the stated and fixed rule of procedure, will, in all probability, be attended with every fatal effect. Now, under such a view and apprehen-

\* Antipatronage Report, Appendix, p. 70.

† That is, very few in the parish who could be brought to attend on the ministry of the presentee, or to be willing to have him for their pastor.

sion as this, was it any wonder, or was it inconsistent with that obedience which we owe to our earthly superiors in the Lord, that we should demur and stop short in carrying a settlement into execution, where, in our apprehension, there was by no means such a concurrence of persons residing in the parish as might give sufficient weight and influence for promoting the great ends of the ministry?

“The Assembly know well, that it appears from their own acts and resolutions, entered into their records, that the law of patronage has been considered as no small grievance to this church, not to say as inconsistent with our union settlement.

“And we find it declared, act 25th of May, 1736, ‘That it is, and has been, since the Reformation, the principle of this church, that no minister shall be intruded into any parish contrary to the will of the congregation; and, therefore, it is seriously recommended, by the said act, to all judicatories of this church, to have a due regard to the said principle in planting vacant congregations, so as none be intruded into such parishes, as they regard the glory of God, and the edification of the body of Christ:’ which recommendation we humbly apprehend to be strongly supported by the principles of reason, and the laws of our Lord Jesus Christ.

“And we must be permitted to say, that after repeated endeavours used by committees of the presbytery, to lessen the opposition to Mr. Richardson in the parish of Inverkeithing, matters still remain in such a situation, that we are brought to this unhappy dilemma, either of coming under the imputation of disobedience to a particular order of our ecclesiastical superiors, or contributing our part to the establishment of measures, which we can neither reconcile with the declared principles, nor with the true interest of this church.

“On the whole, we cannot help thinking, that, by having an active hand in carrying Mr. Richardson’s settlement into execution, we should, as matters now stand, have been the unhappy instruments, to speak in the language of holy writ, ‘of scattering the flock of Christ,’ not to mention what may be the fatal consequences of such settlements to our happy civil constitution.

“If the venerable Assembly shall, on this account, judge us guilty of such criminal disobedience, as to deserve their censures; we trust they will, at least, allow that we have acted as

honest men, willing to forego every secular advantage for conscience' sake.

“ In such an event, this, through grace, shall be our support, that not being charged with any neglect of the duties of our ministry among those committed to our care, we are to suffer for adhering to what we apprehend to be the will of our great Lord and Master,—whose we are, whom we are bound to serve in all things, and on whom we cast all our care. Signed by ROBERT STARK, DAVID HUNTER, THOMAS GILLESPIE, ALEX. DALING, THOMAS FERNIE, and JOHN SPENCE; and dated, Edinburgh, 22d May, 1752.”\*

After this paper was read, the Moderator recommended them to consider their situation, and implored them to take advantage of the opportunity which they still had of saving themselves from the displeasure of the church. The Assembly expected they would have yielded and sacrificed their consciences at the dictates of human authority. They, however, uttered not a word. Parties being removed, a debate ensued. The panels at the bar—for so they must now be called—had given ample cause to provoke discussion on the part of their opponents. They had not resiled from their great principles, that the obedience which they owed to their superiors was “in the Lord,”—that “patronage was a national calamity,”—that, by the “laws of the church and of the Lord Jesus Christ, no minister was to be intruded upon a people,”—that “they would take no active part in Mr. Richardson's induction,”—that they were willing to suffer “for the sake of a good conscience;” and that amid their present trials they were supported by the conviction, that “they had not neglected the duties of their ministry.” The great majority of the old and venerable ministers in the Assembly, who had any name for religion, spoke in their behalf; but the younger ministers, who are hit off in Wotherspoon's ‘Characteristics,’ as destitute of religion, and aping the men of fashion, were all violent against them. It would have been too much, however, to have deposed them all. Popular indignation would have burst out against the Assembly, and six would have formed the nucleus of another secession as numerous and powerful as that of the Erskines. Their aim was to strike quick—to strike safely for the church—and to strike terror into the heart of all.

\* A Letter from a Gentleman, Pp. 6—8.

At length it was carried that *one* out of the six should be *deposed*. They separated without determining which of the six should be sacrificed, and without indicating any probable judgment about the fate of the other five. This was a piece of refined cruelty. It was designed to serve a purpose, and break their spirits. Every one of the six, during night, felt the sentence of deposition lying heavy upon his heart, and visiting his flock and family.

Next day they were called in, not together, but one by one, and asked if they had anything to offer in the way of explanation or retractation. If they had come in together they would have sustained each other, and acted as one body. The policy was, divide and conquer. The plan in part succeeded, though not to the extent that was wished. Stark, Fernie, and Hunter, all shifted their ground a little, and intimated, more or less clearly, that there was a prospect, in altered circumstances and in an increased concurrence at Inverkeithing, of their agreeing. Their consciences were evidently yielding. Where there is a wish there will be a way. Messrs. Daling and Spence would say nothing, and continued firm, neither provoking indignation nor beseeching favour. Last of all came Mr. Gillespie. Instead of feeling any misgivings, he had prepared himself with fresh arguments. As they were constitutionalists, he drew an arrow from the quiver of the constitution, and galled them by a reference to the minutes of the church itself. He read to them the following paper :—

“ Unto the Very Reverend, the Moderator, and the Reverend and Honourable Members of the Venerable Assembly of the Church of Scotland, met at Edinburgh, May 1752,—the humble Representation of Thomas Gillespie, Minister of the Gospel at Carnock.

“ That whereas, in the representation given in to the General Assembly yesterday, it was set forth amongst other things, ‘ That it appears from their own acts and resolutions entered into their records, that the law of patronage has been considered as no small grievance to this church, not to say inconsistent with our union settlement :’ and whereas this paragraph expressed, as it is apprehended, in the softest terms, was considered by some members as an aggravation of our non-compliance with their order : I humbly beg leave to lay before this house, a paragraph



or two taken from a paper entitled, 'The Grounds of the Claim of the Church of Scotland for the Redress of the Grievance of Patronage, entered into the Records of the Assembly on the 22d of May, 1736.' There, after representing the laws respecting our church, the Assembly will find these remarkable words, 'That notwithstanding the security of this our happy Establishment in all its parts, was as great and solemn as it was possible for human laws and constitutions to devise or execute; yet in prejudice of that security, as we apprehend, the Act in the tenth year of Queen Anne was passed, restoring to patrons the power of presenting,' &c. And the said paper concludes with these words, 'That this grievance was brought upon us contrary to the establishment of this church, made at the glorious Revolution, and solemnly confirmed and secured, as an essential condition of the union of the two kingdoms.' It is now humbly submitted, if we have offended by saying as above, 'That the law of patronage has been considered as no small grievance to the church, not to say inconsistent with our union settlement.' And I humbly crave, that the whole of the foresaid grounds of claim may be read, and that this my representation may be entered into the records of court, or kept *in retentis* with other papers.

(Signed)      THOMAS GILLESPIE."

The paper was not received. They were not in a temper of mind to discuss the matter afresh, and modify their judgment. Nor did they read "the Grounds of Claim" as he craved at their hands. That readers may judge of the tenor of the paper which the Assembly refused to read, it is inserted in the Appendix. It was passed at the meeting of the Assembly 1736, when an attempt was made, as already stated, to propitiate the Seceders, and as it had been drawn up, according to Sir H. Moncrieff, in bad faith, the reference to it by Gillespie, at the bar of the Assembly, would be anything but pleasing. It was touching the flesh-spot which was still tender and raw, because it was full of acrid matter. Some very severe reflections were made upon him in court for even presuming to vindicate his conduct in the manner he had done. Without the walls of the Assembly-house it had been openly said that the sentence of deposition would fall on Mr. Gillespie; and it soon became apparent, that to beard the lion in his den, even with the weapons of truth and righteousness, was the certain way of becoming his prey.

Before the last act in the tragedy, which had been hurried through its different stages with unprecedented speed, the Assembly, as is usual in cases of deposition, but which practice, considering the present temper of the House, would have been more honoured in the breach than in the observance, engaged in prayer for the purpose of seeking light and direction whom they should depose. A few straggling votes came out for some of the others; but the great majority of those who voted gave their voice for the deposition of Gillespie. It was evident that many a heart quailed when it came to the point; for, while 56 in all voted, and 52 of these voted against Mr. Gillespie, 102 declined giving any vote; so that it was only about a third of the Assembly that actually cast him out of the church. The others, no doubt, acquiesced; but 52 only joined in calling down 'fire from Heaven to consume him,' and it should, in justice, be added, that they were mostly lawyers who were sitting at the time as elders in the house.

When Gillespie stood up to receive the sentence of deposition, there was in his deportment such Christian meekness, and, at the same time, such dignity arising from devoutness and conscious innocence, that even those who concurred in voting for his deposition could not help feeling a high esteem for him. "On this trying occasion, his mind was guided and encouraged by the words of his Saviour, occurring vividly to his mind,—'What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.'"<sup>\*</sup>

Dr. Cuming pronounced from the chair the following sentence upon him. It was couched in very solemn words, and given forth in the sacred name of the blessed Saviour: "The General Assembly did, and hereby do, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the sole King and Head of the church, and by virtue of the power and authority committed by him to them, depose you, Mr. Thomas Gillespie, Minister at Carnock, from the office of the holy ministry, prohibiting and discharging you to exercise the same, or any part thereof, within this church, in all time coming: and the Assembly did and hereby do declare the church and parish of Carnock vacant, from and after the day and date of this sentence."

This sentence Mr. Gillespie heard with the most becoming gravity, and spoke as follows:—

<sup>\*</sup> Christian Monitor, 11th vol., p. 669. Brown, Inverkeithing.

“Moderator,—I desire to receive this sentence of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, pronounced against me, with real concern, and awful impressions of the Divine conduct in it: but I rejoice, that to me it is given in behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.”

These words were uttered with such Christian meekness, and, at the same time, with all the dignity of conscious innocence, that his warmest opposers were greatly moved, and seemed to feel some relentings for what they had done. There is power in the bleat of an innocent lamb. A few members, indeed, treated his reply with scorn, but a murmur at such an indecency ran through the house, and in different corners of it there was heard an involuntary burst of feeling getting the better of keen partizanship: “Alas! the good man.”

When Mr. Gillespie withdrew from the bar, he was no longer a minister of the Establishment. Before he was arraigned, “the Church of Scotland could boast of no member more honest and sincere, of no minister more pious and faithful; yet by an act of church authority, he was singled out as unworthy of her communion,”\* and stript of the office of the ministry.

The manner and despatch with which the whole affair was conducted, were very remarkable. On Monday, the Assembly gave out the appointment for the induction of Mr. Richardson. Thursday was the day fixed for the settlement. On Friday, the whole presbytery were enjoined to appear at the bar, and report of their obedience. Gillespie disobeyed the appointment as to the induction, but he obeyed the summons, and appeared in court on Friday. On this day, his trial, if it can be so called, began, and “in the space of twenty-four hours, without a libel, or any formal process, he was arraigned, cast, and condemned, merely for non-compliance with a particular order of the Assembly, appointing him to have an active hand in carrying a sentence into execution, which, in his apprehension, he could not have done, without disregarding the true interest, the constitution, and standing laws of the church, and thus violating the solemn vows he had come under when he was admitted minister of Carnock.”† He had joined the Church of Scotland as a free church, where he understood liberty of conscience “in the Lord” to be recognised. His license, and ordination among

\* Letter, p. 13.

† Erskine's Preface to Gillespie's Essay on Temptation, p. 5.

the English Dissenters, had both been sustained. He had been allowed to subscribe the Confession, with explanations about the power of the civil magistrate in religion. And now all these rights and liberties, by a single arbitrary enactment of the Assembly, were swept away, because he would not be a passive instrument to execute the arbitrary sentences of others.

The sentence pronounced upon him, and the mode in which it was done, have been justly held to be painfully "blasphemous." It was pronounced after prayer to God—in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ—by virtue of the power and authority which he had granted to the Assembly. Bogue and Bennet, in their *History of Dissenters*, have said in their own vigorous way: "All the blasphemies in the army and navy for twenty years past, have not equalled the profaneness of that one act of the General Assembly, composed of the ministers and elders of the Church of Scotland."\*

A man like Gillespie, who had been so conscientious in making his way to the ministry, and who had left, when a student, the hall of the Secession, on account of their peculiar terms of communion, was not likely to submit his neck to a still more galling yoke. On the very day on which he had been deposed, he left Edinburgh, and returned to Carnock. He submitted to the sentence in its full extent. He readily renounced all the temporal emoluments arising from the legal Establishment. As he entered the gate leading to the manse, before which there was a little green plot of grass, his wife appearing at the door to welcome him, his first words were, "I am no longer minister of Carnock." Her reply was short, pithy, and affectionate: "Well, if we must beg, I will carry the meal-poke."

In Carnock, Dunfermline, and in all the towns and villages on the banks of the Forth, the news spread with the quickness of a post. Public indignation was excited to the utmost. An immense concourse of people assembled on the Sabbath morning at Carnock. A person who was cognisant of all the circumstances, and who published the letter the week following, which we have already more than once quoted, says, "He would not so much as preach in the church of Carnock, nor allow the bell to be rung; but repaired to the open fields: and having chosen for his text the words of the apostle Paul, 1 Cor. ix. 16, 'Ne-

\* Vol. iv. p. 68.



cessity is laid upon me ; yea, Wo is unto me if I preach not the gospel.' He told his hearers, that though the Assembly had deposed him from being a minister in the Established church, for not doing what he believed it was sinful for him to do ; yet he hoped, through grace, no public disputes should be his theme ; but Jesus and him crucified : and desired, at all seasons, to have it in his eye, that the 'wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God : ' and then went on, to lay before them the great and important truths of the everlasting gospel, without one reflecting word on all that had past."

It would be wrong to claim for Gillespie the mildness of an angel. He had naturally a quick temper. He both knew and *felt* he had been wronged. Though his sermon was no doubt an expression of his matured judgment in reference to his deposition, yet his feelings broke forth a little in the commencing psalm. He sung the first twenty-four lines of Psalm lxxiii.

" Yet God is good to Israel,  
To each pure-hearted one.  
But as for me, my steps near slipp'd,  
My feet were almost gone.  
For I envious was, and grudg'd  
The foolish folk to see,  
When I perceiv'd the wicked sort  
Enjoy prosperity," &c.

Various conjectures have been made, as to the cause why the Assembly concentrated their votes upon Gillespie, so that his deposition was all but unanimous on the part of those who had courage or temerity to vote. It has often been said by very respectable authorities, that he was Moderator of the presbytery, and was appointed to preach at Inverkeithing, and having failed to do so, he was punished with marked severity for contempt of court. These things are mere fictions. Mr. Spence of Orwell was Moderator, and was appointed to preach. Mr. Gillespie had no service whatever assigned him.

In his Appendix to the Life of Erskine, Sir H. Moncrieff seems to ascribe it to the supposed inferiority of his talents. "He was one of the most upright men of his time. He was equally zealous and faithful in his pastoral duties, and his private life was irreproachable. *His talents were certainly underrated by those who marked him out among his brethren as the most eligible victim of a disobedience in which so many were associated.*" Were this insinuation correct, it would fix an indelible stain upon the mem-

ory of Robertson. Depose a man because he was unable to defend himself! Gillespie's character repudiates the reproach thus cast indirectly upon his memory. The minutes of the Assembly suggest the proper grounds. They state, "that by the deposition of Mr. Thomas Gillespie at Carnock, they not only have asserted the authority of this supreme court, but have inflicted upon him a censure adequate to repeated acts of disobedience *adhered to tenaciously when at the bar.*" His second paper, therefore, drew upon him the vengeance of the court. No man signed it but himself. In it he says, "that whereas the representation of yesterday had given offence by stating patronage was considered a grievance to the church," he returns to the charge, and ventures single-handed to reiterate the assertion, and is therefore marked out and borne down by the phalanx as the most obstinate offender. The minutes of next year, carefully scrutinized, even ~~kythe~~ a deeper and more worthless ground of offence against Gillespie. He had been licensed by the English Dissenters, and entered the church on their liberal principles. He had signed the Confession of Faith with an explanation about the power of the civil magistrate in religious matters, which power was now the very thing to be covertly established by a vigorous decision. These things are not even mooted in his sentence; but the commission of 1753, soon after Mr. Gillespie's case had been reviewed and finally decided, brought in a stringent overture for the very purpose of preventing all such licentiates by the English Dissenters, as Gillespie, from getting into the church on such terms as he had done. These things show where the sore point lay. Having got quit of him, they seem to have barricaded the door, that no such persons might afterwards enter.

The other offenders belonging to the presbytery of Dunfermline were involved in the same transgression, but they had not the same sternness of principle as Gillespie. Some of them, such as Fernie of Dunfermline, merely feared the people. The Assembly, therefore, "being desirous to mix mercy and lenity with their judgment," (as they phrase it,) renewed upon the presbytery the injunction of admitting Mr. Richardson, and empowered the synod of Fife to consider the excuses of those who did not attend; and if not satisfied therewith, enjoined their suspension "from the exercise of their offices in all presbyteries, synods, and General Assemblies; aye, and until they shall re-

spectively testify their sorrow for their disobedience to its acts and ordinances.”\* Only three of all the presbytery stood firmly out to the last, and refused either by deeds or words to yield submission. “Messrs. *Spence* of Orwell, *Hunter* of Saline, and *Daling* of Cleish, were, in consequence of the Assembly’s sentence, *ipso facto*, suspended from their judicial functions in all church courts, except their own sessions;” and under this sentence they remained until the year 1765,—a period of thirteen years,—when the Assembly, taking the alarm at the spread of schism in the church, removed the sentence of suspension, and reposed them “to their former judicative capacity.”† Fear led to this relaxation of rigour.

The constitutional party in the Assembly, by these decisions against Gillespie and his co-presbyters, obtained a complete triumph over their opponents. It was now determined that the Church of Scotland henceforward was to be governed on the two following principles:—1. “That as PATRONAGE is the law of the land, the courts of a national church established and protected by law, and all the individual ministers of that church, are bound, in as far as it depends upon exertions arising from the duties of their place, to give it effect. 2. That church courts betrayed their duty to the constitution when the spirit of their decisions, or negligence in enforcing obedience to their orders, created unnecessary obstacles to the exercise of the right of patronage, and fostered in the minds of the people the false idea that they have a right to choose their own ministers, or even a negative upon the nomination of the patron.”‡ Patronage was now to be supported not merely as the existing law, but as the most expedient way of settling vacant parishes.

The moderator, Dr. Cuming, was so much gratified with the decision of the Assembly, which crushed the disobedient presbytery of Dunfermline, that he congratulated the court in highly eulogistic terms for doing what “His Majesty’s Commissioner was pleased in his speech to recommend;” and that they had done “something to strengthen that constitution which was settled in 1592.” In his own pompous way he proceeded: “We are the ministers of the gospel of Christ; we are also ministers of a church established by law; but a subordination of judicatories is established by law. If this is not preserved, we give up our

\* Gen. Ass. Min.

† Morren’s Annals, vol. i. p. 308.

‡ Stewart’s Life of Robertson, Appendix, p. 190.

constitution and the legal advantages of it; we ourselves abandon that right we have by the articles of the union settlement.— It was, therefore, necessary that something should be done to maintain the authority of the church. I know it will be a prejudice against what the Assembly have done, *that the argument was supported by several young members*, (alluding to Robertson, Home, and others;) but it was by young men in defence of our old constitution. The terms on which we became ministers of the Established Church are fixed and known, are approved and subscribed to by us. If the consciences of some cannot come up to these terms, which are thought essential to our constitution, they may be deprived of the legal advantages of the church. God forbid that those who cannot come up to these terms are not good men; but this may be said, that they are not good Presbyterians.”\* Ah! it was in any thing but good taste thus to blow the trump of victory over a man who had been stripped of his benefice for the sake of a good conscience. If Gillespie was not a good Presbyterian, it was because he believed the laws of the Presbyterian Established Church were not consistent with the laws of Christ.

The merits of his case are vividly sketched in a pamphlet, understood to have been written by his friend, Walker of Dundonald, nearly twenty years afterwards. What would he have said if he had penned it under the first burst of indignation? “The case of this Reverend brother (for so I must still call him) is so well known, that it will be needless to expatiate upon it. I shall only observe, that a settlement having been appointed within the bounds of the presbytery whereof he was a member, contrary to the will of the congregation, and consequently against the standing rules and constitutions of this church, which none of her judicatories can, agreeably to our constitution, disobey, or command others to do so; he was one of those who refused obedience to so illegal an order. He pled in his own defence, not only the laws of this church, but the laws of the Great Head and sole King of the church, whereby we are expressly prohibited to do any thing that tends, not to the edification, but to the destruction of his people; and, at the same time, are assured, that *to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean*, or sinful. The

\* Min. of Ass., 1752.



Assembly 1752, before whom this affair came, were in no sort of strait to get their illegal appointment executed, without encroaching upon the rights of conscience; there being a sufficient quorum of that presbytery willing and ready to do it. But nothing would satisfy them, unless it were likewise done by such of them as, in the doing of it, would be conscious that they were committing a deliberate and known sin. This, I acknowledge, is charging that Assembly with so astonishing a degree of wickedness, that I wish it were in my power to retract it. Gladly would I do so, if you or any body else could point out to me a possibility of their seeing the matter in any other light. Whatever were their own views of the thing commanded, had they been to execute it themselves; could they avoid being sensible, that in the views of others, and particularly in Mr. Gillespie's views, it would have been a sin for him to do what they required? Does any body imagine, that I can innocently do a thing which appears to me to be a sin? O the cruelty of worldly men! Did they know that, to a conscientious man, the being tied to a stake was an arrant trifle in comparison with what they so unrelentingly insisted on? So the being deprived of his stipend appeared to Mr. Gillespie and others. For which cause and nothing else, he was, in the name of Christ, deposed *ab officio et beneficio*.”\*

Among the pious people throughout the Church of Scotland the lamentation over the fate of Gillespie was loud and bitter. The friends of religious liberty were greatly alarmed. The church was now indeed linked to the throne, and its chain consisted of three links—*pay, patronage, and passive obedience*. The second the church had hitherto been able to weaken, and at times disannul; and, of course, the third had usually fallen to the ground; but now the church, with her own hands, and upon her own stithy, had welded the link of patronage, and the chain was complete. In practice as well as in theory the thing was now considered perfect.

Whitefield saw with different eyes from the moderator of the Assembly. He knew what it was to be a minister of Christ untrammelled. When he heard that the Assembly had deposed Mr. Gillespie, it called forth from him the hearty sarcastic remark, “I wish Mr. Gillespie joy. The POPE has turned Pres-

\* An Alarm to the Church of Scotland, p. 53.

*byterian*. How blind is Satan ! What does he get by casting out Christ's servants ? I expect great good will come out of these confusions. Mr. Gillespie will do more good in one week now than before in a year."\* Whitefield well knew that to strike human nature roughly, was the sure way to elicit the sparks which would kindle the flame.

At the same time it must in candour be acknowledged, that the tactics pursued by the Assembly were the best which could be followed for enforcing implicit obedience, and guarding against the rise of another sect of dissenters. They had dallied with the Seceders for eight years before they had deposed them ; and they had suffered them to increase to six before they were lopped off ; so that they had both numbers and time to form a compact and powerful ecclesiastical body ; but, in this case, the Assembly only cut off one, and cut him off at once, and naturally expected that he would be a warning to others, and die as he dropped upon the ground ; but God can turn human wisdom into folly, for he was received into a very kindly soil—the sympathies of the public. Though he was longer in putting forth his branches, and becoming a shelter to the oppressed, than if he had consorted from the first with others ; yet he in due time convinced his persecutors that he was not a dead branch purged out of the Vine, but “the rod of an almond tree,” in the hand of the great High Priest, “budding and blossoming and bringing forth fruit.”† “The right hand of the Lord is exalted ; the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly. I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord.”

\* The Life and Times of Whitefield, p. 408.

† Though Cuming, Robertson, and Home, who were the three principal persons engaged in the deposition of Gillespie, were, no doubt, acting according to what they considered the constitution of an Established church ; yet, it is remarkable how they themselves were all humbled in the very same church. In two or three years, Cuming, amidst bitter chagrin, saw his power as leader pass into the hands of Robertson. He was outvoted in 1754 as to the Law Agent of the Church, and could not conceal his wounded feelings. In 1757, Home took refuge in resignation, to escape deposition for writing plays, favouring and frequenting theatres. And, in 1780, Robertson, as will yet be seen more at large, was so much pressed, by the moderate party, “to abolish subscription to the Confession of Faith and formula ;” and was otherwise so fretted and teased, that he gave up the leadership of the Assembly, and retired into the shade, rather than resile from that rigid enforcement of law which had elevated him into power, and which led to the deposition of Gillespie as its first martyr. Extreme measures are always dangerous, to those against whom they are employed, and those who employ them.

## CHAPTER VII.

THE FAILURE OF THE ATTEMPT TO REMOVE FROM GILLESPIE THE SENTENCE OF DEPOSITION, AND RESTORE HIM TO HIS FORMER STANDING IN THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND.

MR. GILLESPIE having been deposed from being a minister of the Established church, was not thereby stripped of the office of the ministry. This he had received from the Dissenters in England; and, on the foundation of the validity of their ordination, he had been inducted into the parish of Carnock. From the moment he was ejected he gave up all the civil privileges and emoluments which were connected with the Establishment. The place where he resumed his labours as a Dissenting minister was in the churchyard of Carnock, an immense crowd of people standing on the sloping ground to the south of the church. As the churchyard was ecclesiastical property, and his preaching there gave offence, he removed to a little holm near to the mill; but from this he was also compelled to remove. He was at length literally driven to the highway. At the back of the manse, on the public road, there was a patch of waste ground, which lay uncultivated and unclaimed; and to this spot he removed his tent, and preached to an immense concourse of people during the whole of summer and harvest. It does not appear that he went about the country telling his wrongs, and hawking his sorrows, but humbly and quietly sustained himself with a good conscience, and kept himself to the faithful discharge of his ministerial duties. Public sympathy now gave double effect to the solemnity of his preaching.\* The summer

\* In returning one day from the tent, Mrs. Gillespie, with her husband, passed a party of his hearers who were commiserating him. They did not observe them. They said audibly to each other, "Poor man, they have taken the butter off his bread." To this Mrs. G., dropping a step behind her husband, quickly replied, "Ay, but we'll put it on again with a clean knife."

was dry and warm, and his people, without a Sabbath's intermission, sat contentedly under the broad expanse of Heaven.

The only meeting of presbytery which Mr. Gillespie ever attended after his deposition, was one which was held at Dunfermline soon after the meeting of Assembly. All the extracts and deeds of Assembly in his case were then to be read and given effect to. It is said to have been held in the old church—Ralph Erskine's. It was again the witness of arbitrary measures similar to those which drove Ralph, after a long struggle, from the bosom of the Establishment. The church was crowded. Mr. Gillespie's name was removed from the roll of presbytery, and he made no effort to retain it. It would have been vain. As he rose to retire through the dense crowd, Thomson of Dunfermline, who had been his keenest foe, is reported to have cried out with heartless mockery, "Make way there for the man with the strait-laced conscience."

As winter approached, Mr. Gillespie's congregation began to look out for a house in which to meet. Besides his own flock in Carnock, a number of most respectable persons in Dunfermline espoused his cause and approved of his principles. It so happened that, during the very summer (1752) that he was preaching in the open air, the Antiburghers erected their meeting-house at Cairneyhill, which was the only village in the parish of Carnock where a meeting-house was likely to succeed. It is not known that there was the slightest intention in this to annoy Mr. Gillespie in the midst of his troubles, but it effectually excluded him from the parish. Dunfermline, which was at hand—a place of wealth, of enlightened sentiments, and where the battle of religious liberty had already been fought in the rise of the Secession, was deemed the most favourable spot for commencing a church. The congregation of Ralph Erskine were then very much distracted about choosing a helper and successor. Mr. Erskine died two months after Mr. Gillespie came to Dunfermline, and, during the long vacancy of six years which followed, he got not a few of those as adherents who were fretted by repeated disappointments. His friends subscribed money, purchased a house, and fitted it up as a church for him "*during his life*;" and, at his death, the subscribers were to meet and determine by vote what should be done with it. He took possession of it in the month of September. The terms on which the contributors gave their money show that, if they did not contemplate the erection of a new sect,



neither did they anticipate his reception within the bosom of the Establishment. It was to be a church for him "during his life."

After Mr. Gillespie took possession of his meeting-house in Dunfermline, the established presbytery ordered supply of sermon for Carnock. Out of respect to its former pastor, who was preaching beside it, no step was taken to set up an altar against him. This was in good taste. Only one elder continued by the parish-church. All the others, together with the greater number of the parishioners, went in every Sabbath to Dunfermline along with their beloved minister, who did not even remove from the manse till the summer of the succeeding year. He was universally regarded as a man suffering for the sake of conscience, and great tenderness was shown him.

His friends throughout the Church of Scotland were not idle; and very active measures were taken to have the sentence of deposition removed at the meeting of next Assembly. They were convinced that the blow was aimed through him at the popular party; and that, if they did not get the sentence set aside, the dominant party would either depose them too, or exact passive obedience at their hands. They therefore sounded the tocsin of alarm throughout the country. By newspaper paragraphs, and especially by pamphlets,\* which were then the favourite mode of waging war from the press,—they kept alive public attention, and enlisted the sympathies of the people in behalf of popular measures. The ministers formed themselves into associations, and stirred up the eldership to call upon their pastors—if they were moderates—and expostulate with them, and by all means to get a class of elders returned to the Assembly in 1753, who *were of the people*, and who would not sympathize with the Government junto.† Meetings were held at Linlithgow and Edinburgh during the summer, at which Mr. Gillespie seems to have been present, when they took joint counsel with each other how they could strengthen their party, and preserve the last remains of liberty and of popular control within the Established Church of Scotland. The old days, when every congregation was free—neither touching the money nor bound by the shackles of the State—though the persecutor's horn sounded through their glens and over their moors—

\* See in the Appendix, a list of some of the Pamphlets published; and a key to their connection and import.

† Letter by several Elders, 1752. Loud Cry, 1752.

had left a taste for liberty which spurned the interference of powdered and perfumed statesmen.

The drift of all the pamphlets noted in the Appendix was very much of the same tenor as the reasons of dissent, and the answers to them—the substance of which has already been given. It would be tedious to analyze them. Those by M'Laurin are long; but they sift the subject in the most thorough and satisfactory manner, and pour forth the stores of an uncommonly rich mind. He was too liberal and enlightened to be a minister in an Established church: so that he might well say of himself, "Though possessed of a benefice in the Established Church of Scotland, if he had lived in England he would, in all probability, have been a dissenter there."\* However, the temper of the times, and the bearing of the two parties towards each other, cannot be appreciated without seeing the very mode in which they planted their feet and handled their weapons. A few extracts from 'The Vindicator' of the Assembly, who is free and outspoken, and heartily convinced of the goodness of his cause; and also from some of the other pamphlets on the other side of the question, will help to realize the stirring scenes of the period.

The 'Vindicator,' in answer to the authors of the 'Elders' Letter,' and 'A Loud Cry,' declares that the act, 1736, against intrusion, and pled by the Dunfermline presbytery at the bar of the Assembly, was made, as Sir H. Moncrieff afterwards declared, to serve a purpose, when the Assembly were dealing with the Seceders; that it was not an act but merely a recommendation, as it was never sent down to presbyteries; and that the Assembly, and not the people, were the supreme judges as to a settlement being an intrusion or not. He repudiates "the gross insinuation that the Assembly was acting on Antichristian, Popish, and arbitrary principles in appointing the Dunfermline presbytery to execute the settlement at Inverkeithing," for they were bound by their ordination vow to give obedience "to the authority of the church." It was no "little matter" to which forbearance could be extended—"preserving the discipline and government of the church." Condescension and quiet yieldings in former years as to church authority, had almost swamped the Assembly without doing any good; and the same leaven was still souring and fermenting in its bosom. "To arrest the evil at once, and to pre-

\* Terms of Com., p. 1.

vent men of such turbulent and anarchical principles from doing any farther harm, one has been cast out to prove a warning to others." He winds up his pamphlet in the following manner, which contains its pith and substance:—"As the parliament of Great Britain is the supreme interpreter of the laws, and has the sole right of determining all questions and disputes about the extent and meaning of them among the subjects, and their determinations are final, which none dare dispute or control under the severest penalties; so the General Assembly is the supreme interpreter of all our church laws, and the only judge when, and by whom they are observed or transgressed, and is clothed with power of inflicting censures upon transgressors; and therefore, if any particular persons presume to set up their own private judgment in opposition to the supreme authority of the church, they are justly to be reckoned as so many Popes, invaders of the rights and underminers of the constitution of the church, which consists in a subordination of judicatories, which every minister at his ordination, vows in the most solemn manner to support and submit to."

The pamphlets of the popular party were not only more numerous than those of their opponents, but they also displayed more talent. Whatever may be thought of their consistent reasoning, as being written by persons connected with the Establishment, there is about them a fine glow of sanctified warmth for the truth as it is in Jesus, and an earnest desire to secure, according to their knowledge, that liberty wherewith Christ has made his people free. They certainly make out against the prevailing party gross acts of oppression towards Gillespie, which either arose from the system of an Establishment, or from a personal desire to crush him and the Dunfermline presbytery. The popular party held as a first principle, that the General Assembly had no power, according to the constitution of the church, to make, repeal, or arbitrarily to fix the meaning of laws, but simply to pass those of which the majority of presbyteries had approved, and to execute them according to the meaning of the church. On this they founded a variety of charges which may be palliated by a clever pleader, but which can never be fully set aside.

Laying down the palpable distinction between a *legal* government, or a government by *laws*; and an *arbitrary* government, or a government of *mere will*, on the part of the administrators; they charged the moderate party with an endeavour to change the government of the church "from a free and legal, to an arbitrary

and despotic one.”\* By the constitution of the church the Assembly could make no enactment till it was transmitted, examined, and sanctioned by the presbyteries; but now the Assembly, by a mere arbitrary enactment, had ventured to set aside the Form of process, and strip men of office, without even dealing with them by committee or conference, though they were acting according to the “constitution” in refusing to intrude ministers upon reclaiming congregations.

In carrying out their arbitrary enactments, the moderates held the maxim already referred to in the reasons of dissent, “that no sooner is a regulation enacted by the supreme legislative power of any society than private judgment is so far suspended; that even those who disapprove of it are, notwithstanding, bound to obey it, and put it in execution if required.” “That is,” says M'Laurin, with a keen edge of railery, “that the plea which the apostles Peter and John insist upon, over and over again with the Jewish sanhedrim, the supreme court of that nation, both in civil and religious affairs, has no meaning whatsoever, but is neither more nor less than a piece of downright nonsense. According to the new doctrine, it is the merest and idlest chimera; nay, an absolute impossibility, that ever we can be reduced to the dilemma which the apostles, knowing no better, it seems, imagined themselves under, of disobeying either God or men. The Jewish Rabbies themselves, of whom that high court was composed, seem to have been quite ignorant of those ‘first principles of society;’ for, if they had possessed only the least inkling of them, they would easily have cut off the retreat of the apostles by telling them, our judgment must necessarily be absolute and final; and no sooner is any thing enacted by us, than private judgment is so far superseded, that even you who disapprove of it, are, notwithstanding, bound to obey it.”†

The only exception allowed by the Moderates to universal obedience, was when the action enjoined was “a case of such *gross* iniquity and manifest violation of the original design of the society as justifies resistance to the supreme power, and makes it better to have the society dissolved than to submit to established iniquity.” “Now, gentlemen,” says M'Laurin, “I understand you, which indeed I confess I was very loth to do. For if an exception (as it is always taken for granted) confirms and

\* Nat. of Eccl. Gov., pp. 118—120.

† The Terms of Ministerial and Christian Communion, p. 25.



establishes, defines and specifies the rule in all particulars not excepted, we now have your meaning with some more distinctness and accuracy. So it seems if there be any immoral action, the commanding of which is not a sufficient ground for revolution in the government, it may be our duty to commit it. It seems one not only may commit adultery, incest, drunkenness, perjury, &c. without sin; but if particular acts of those crimes be enjoined by the supreme power in any society, civil or ecclesiastical, it would be a sin not to commit them. We maintain that our earthly superiors are to be obeyed in all lawful things, but not in things which seem to us unlawful. You distinguish between gross iniquity, or great sins, and lesser ones; between a manifest violation of the end of society, and what is not so. And superiors are never to be disobeyed according to you; but when the action commanded to be done is one of those gross iniquities that would be a manifest violation of the original design of society, and what would justify rebellion and a revolution. And consequently they ought to be obeyed when they enjoin the commission of sins that are of a smaller magnitude, or sins that are not utterly inconsistent with the end of society.”\*

In a passage of great power, M<sup>c</sup>Laurin refers to the bitter fountain from whence all the evils, then afflicting the Church of Scotland, sprang, and which prompted her to be so arbitrary in her proceedings, and so resolute to square her proceedings according to the wish of the State. Her establishment had stripped her of a large portion of her liberty as a church of Christ, and her support coming from the Government and not from the people, she, for the sake of the benefice, prostituted the discipline of Christ's house. It is an instructive paragraph as coming from a Churchman.

“That which gives me the most sensible alarm in the characters of many who make the greatest figure, have the most powerful sway in, and are the most constant and standing members of our General Assemblies, is, that many of them do not seem to consider the church in any other light than as a creature of the civil government. In so far as the disposal of any temporalities is committed to an ecclesiastical judicature by authority of parliament, this is what they can understand, and appears to draw some sort of regard from them. But as for the church being a

\* The Terms of Ministerial and Christian Communion.—Pp. 38, 39.

society erected, and a government instituted therein by Christ for purposes purely spiritual, pointing at quite other ends than those of civil government, and carried on by very different means, if ever it falls under their consideration in this view, I must be excused to say, that I heartily wish there was a more sensible appearance of it in their conduct. There is no affair that takes up more time, and occasions greater debates in the General Assembly, than the settlement of vacant churches. And a matter, to be sure, of no small importance it is, considered in the light of providing for the church *pastors according to God's own heart, who may feed them*, and promote the great end of their spiritual edification. It is true, that by the *laws of this land, a right to the public maintenance may depend upon the decisions of church judicatories*. But has not this circumstance (which I could easily show you is considered by the parliament itself only as a consequence of the thing) so absolutely engrossed the attention of many, and become so far the only object of their concern, that these affairs are frequently decided not only without any regard to the *edification* of the people, but in a manner that must obviously and apparently tend to their spiritual *destruction*? And must this circumstance of a *benefice annexed to the cure of souls*, together with another which, indeed, I believe, must be added here, a number of lawyers being members of our supreme court, *make an essential alteration in the nature of our proceedings*, and change that *spiritual* government which Christ has instituted, and that *spiritual* power which he has given to his church for edification and not for destruction, into something merely *secular*, where *edification* is so far from being at all in view; that spiritual *destruction* is the known, the notour, and the experienced consequence? We have long carried on our proceedings in the name and by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, especially in the awful sentence of deposing a minister out of his service. But if the influence of the gentlemen who commonly sit about the throne continues to prevail, it is high time for us to alter our style, or rather to let the civil judges decide all these matters, not in the New-kirk aisle, but on the other side of the Parliament-close."\*

In applying these general principles to the case of Gillespie, his defenders ask pointedly if the Assembly had not arbitrarily

\* The Nature of Ecclesiastic Government, and of the Constitution of the Church of Scotland Illustrated.—Pp. 36, 37.

violated a fundamental law in assuming a power to enlarge the *quorum* of the presbytery. If any inconvenience appeared in the paucity of *three* as fixed by the constitution, it belonged to the legislative powers,—the presbyteries to appoint the remedy. The Assembly had no right to innovate to serve a particular purpose. Farther, there was something worse than this. The change of the *quorum* being introduced after the recusant brethren had declared their scruples, was evidently made on purpose to involve and expose them to censure, contrary to humanity and the principle of all right governed societies, which make laws to prevent and punish future crimes, but never with the view to ensnare individuals and punish crimes committed. Again, it was most despotic and unconstitutional to inflict censure on members who, in justification of their conduct, pled and adduced at the bar the acts and declarations of the church not only not repealed, but at the very time, from aught that appeared to the contrary, approved by the majority of the collective body: and lastly, it was asked, if Gillespie, whom they had deposed, had transgressed any law of Christ—any part of the ecclesiastic constitution—or if it was not rather a law formed and imposed by men; and if it was a human law, let it be made appear by what warrant and authority the censures of Christ's government are assumed; let it be made appear that it is not a most bold, daring, and impious prostitution of the censures of Christ's church to denounce and inflict them in his name and authority on any but those who are disobedient to his express laws, and walk unworthy of him; let it be made appear *that it is not confounding two things totally distinct,—the Church of Christ, and the Church established by law*; and stamping with his *sacred image* and *superscription* what alone ought to bear the image and *superscription of Cæsar*.\* It was tenaciously held by Gillespie's friends to be awfully impious that a minister should be deposed “in the name of Jesus and by his authority,”—not for erroneous doctrine advanced or defended,—not for want of piety, fidelity, or zeal,—not for any direct violation of his laws or institutions, but for disobeying a government order; ay, and that there was mean creeping villany in it; for as the civil constitution had connected the benefice with the ministerial office, they had deposed him from the latter, that in terms of Law, though not of the New

\* An Inquiry into the powers of the General Assembly, (pp. 5, 6, 7,) by T. G——n. Letter in Scots Mag., 1752; p. 343, by the same.

Testament, he might be stripped of the former—his stipend. These were pungent accusations; and, if pushed to their fair conclusion, would have led to a separation between the popular party and all state-endowments.

The objections which the popular party were most diffculted to meet and to parry, were the two following: who is to interpret the laws of the church, and who must execute its sentences? The church had no higher court than the Assembly. They rather shirked the questions, saying it must be a properly constituted Assembly, than gave direct and explicit answers. This they were certain of, however, that the Assembly had laws which were its constitution; and according to these, and not by arbitrary appointments, she was to be governed. They looked to their congregations and presbyteries as the popular bodies which were to regulate and check the arbitrary and despotic procedure of the supreme legislative and executive Assembly; and they would not have been disappointed in their expectation had it not been for the outward magnetic influence which the State with its gold exercised; and which destroyed that balance of power which Christ had introduced into his kingdom, where all are brethren. As M'Laurin intimates, "the benefice annexed to the cure of souls" was the radical evil.

Connected with those arbitrary proceedings which were openly laid to the charge of the government-section of the Assembly, and of which Gillespie's deposition was a flagrant instance, there was also said to be among the Moderates a great degree of coldness towards the King of Zion, and a negative departure from the doctrines of salvation by grace. They were supposed to be tinctured with the opinions of Hume and other sceptics, who then gave the tone to the polite and literary society of Edinburgh. It was to this view of the case that Wotherspoon directed his clear, keen, satirical pen, and produced 'The Ecclesiastical Characteristics,' in support of Gillespie, to which he was provoked by Hyndman's pamphlet in support of the Assembly which was "written with the express purpose of representing the popular party as agitators of the people, and as in general not acting upon conscience even when they pretend to it, but from a love of popularity."\*

The object of Wotherspoon, in his well-known pamphlet, was

\* Apology for Characteristics, p. 13.



to show how the character of a Moderate minister, at that time in repute in the Church of Scotland, might be attained. Among other rules, "He is to consider all clergymen suspected of heresy as men of great genius; he is to screen and protect those who are charged with loose and immoral practices; to speak of the Confession of Faith with a sneer; to confine his preaching to social duties; ape the fine gentleman; lay aside all appearance of religion;" and, among other things, "In church settlements, which are the principal causes that come before ministers for judgment, the only thing to be regarded is, who the patron and the great and noble heritors are for; the inclinations of the common people are to be utterly despised. Whenever a settlement is decided over the belly of the whole people in the parish, by a majority in the General Assembly, the victory should be improved by appointing some of the orthodox opposers of the settlement to execute it, especially those of them that pretend to have a scruple of conscience at having an active hand in any such settlement. As to the world in general, a moderate man is to have great charity for atheists and deists in principle, and for persons that are loose and vicious in their practice: but none at all for those that have a high profession of religion, and a great pretence to strictness in their walk and conversation."\* When Dr. Wotherspoon, nearly twenty years afterwards, defended his *Characteristics* in his 'Serious Apology for them,' he does not resile one iota from his charges, but reiterates and defends them at great length, both as "to morality and doctrine." The case of Gillespie throughout gives the edge to his satire.

President Edwards took the same view of the matter as Wotherspoon, and considered the deposition of his friend Mr. Gillespie as springing from a radical dislike of evangelical doctrine and pious ministers. The letter which he wrote to him when he heard of his deposition, breathes a truly tender and affectionate spirit. It was written in the midst of his own persecutions and annoyances, and he had a fellow-feeling for him as a stricken deer.

" STOCKBRIDGE, 24th Nov., 1752.

"REV. AND DEAR BROTHER,—In letters and pamphlets lately forwarded to me by some of my correspondents in Scotland, I have

\* *Ecclesiastical Characteristics*, Maxims 8, 10, 12.

received the affecting and surprising account of your deposition, for not assisting in the settlement of Mr. Richardson at Inverkeithing. The circumstances of which affair seem to me to be such, as abundantly manifest your cause to be good; at the same time that they plainly show the persecuting spirit with which you have been proceeded against. It is strange that a Protestant church should condemn and depose one of her ministers for conscientiously declining to act in a forced settlement of a minister over a congregation that have not chosen him as their pastor, but are utterly averse to his ministrations, at least as to a stated attendance upon them. It is to be wondered at that such a church at this time of day, after the cause of liberty in matters of conscience has been so abundantly defended, should arrogate to herself such a kind of authority over the consciences of both ministers and people, and use it in such a manner, by such severity, to establish that which is not only contrary to the liberty of Christians, wherewith Christ has made them free, but so directly contrary to her own principles, acts, and resolutions, entered on public record. The several steps of this proceeding, and some singular measures taken, and the hastiness and vehemence of the proceeding, are such as savour very strongly of the very spirit of persecution, and must be greatly to the dishonour of the Church of Scotland, and are such as will naturally engage the friends of God's people abroad in the world in your favour, as suffering very injuriously. It is wonderful that a church which has itself suffered so much by prosecution should be guilty of so much persecution. This proceeding gives reason to suspect that the Church of Scotland, which was once so famous, is not what it once was. It appears probable to me, at this distance, that there is something else at the bottom besides a zeal to uphold the authority of the church. Perhaps many of the clergy of the Church of Scotland have their minds secretly infected with those lax principles of the new divinity, and have imbibed the *liberal* doctrines, as they are accounted, which are so much in vogue at the present day, and so contrary to the strict, mysterious, spiritual, soul-humbling principles of our forefathers. I have observed that these modern, fashionable opinions, however called noble and liberal, are commonly not only attended with a haughty contempt, but an inward malignant bitterness of heart, toward all the zealous professors and defenders of the contrary spiritual prin-

ciples that do so nearly concern the vitals of religion and the power of experimental godliness."\*

While the best and the greatest of men, both in Scotland and America, were thus taking a deep interest in the deposition of Gillespie, the people in general throughout the country did not less extend towards him tender commiseration. The east and the west of Scotland, and particularly the vale of the Forth, was like a boiling caldron during the summer of 1752, and the spring of 1753. As the time of the meeting of the Assembly drew nigh, the church courts began to prepare for the struggle. The popular party had public sympathy on their side, and they did not fail to take advantage of the general excitement which was in their favour. An overture was sent up from the large and influential synod of Glasgow and Ayr: "That the authority of the church should not be interposed to oblige ministers under pain of deposition, to have an active hand in carrying into effect, settlements which appear to them contrary to the word of God and the constitution of the church. That no minister shall be deposed, without a libel first given him, making special condescension on the rules transgressed by the facts libelled; and these, such rules, the transgression of which is already declared to infer deposition; and that in case of such a libel, the accused have sufficient time allowed him, ten free days at least, to make his defences, except in cases referred to in the form of process. That the Assembly would be pleased to take off the censures from Mr. Gillespie, and the other brethren of the presbytery of Dunfermline, upon a proper application from themselves, and in a manner that may be consistent with the authority and honour of the Church; hoping this may contribute much to the maintaining the peace of the church." This was carrying the war into the Assembly-house at once, telling them that they had erred, and calling upon them to rescind their enactments. The synod of Lothian and Tweeddale having been asked to concur in this overture, became indignant; took the Assembly under their favouring wing, (or more properly, took themselves under their own wing, for in this synod were the constitutional leaders,) and sent up

\* Memoirs of Dr. Edwards, by S. E. Dwight, prefixed to his works. Edition, London, 1834, p. 194.—It is but justice to remark—and let both parties make their own use of it—that Dr. John Erskine, the colleague of Dr. Robertson, in his Sermon on his Death, eulogizes him highly as a minister, and asserts that he held the Doctrine of the Atonement. Dr. E. never had any scruple about attending on his ministry when he was himself not preaching.

an overture directly in the teeth of that from the west; and even designated it and others as tending to weaken ecclesiastical authority and subvert good order and government, and expressly called upon the Assembly to support the constitution and maintain the honour and authority of the church. It was evident that there were no relentings in the dominant party, and that the "venerable republican constitution" of the Church of Scotland was about to be sacrificed by a race of young ministers, who had learned to look to London and not to the doings of the bonnetted Covenanters for direction and support.

When the Assembly met in May, the popular party had decidedly the majority, and victory seemed certain. All the arbitrary measures of last year were on the eve of being swept away. The first trial of strength was in choosing a moderator. The constitutionalists put upon the leet, Principal Leechman of Glasgow, whose attainments, character, and office made him a person of great influence. The popular party voted for Mr. Alexander Webster, Edinburgh, who was a great friend of the Dunfermline presbytery, of which he had once been a member, the personal acquaintance of Gillespie, the strong opponent of the Inverkeithing settlement, the most popular minister in the church; and they carried their man and put him in the moderator's chair. This was a triumph which struck dismay into the obsequious ranks which sat at the foot of the throne.

The Earl of Leven was royal commissioner. He was an excellent general, and knew well the authority with which he was armed. In rallying broken forces he knew that hints would not do. As his majesty's commissioner he spoke boldly out, and told the Assembly what as an Establishment was their line of duty. In a direct and authoritative speech from the throne, he laid down to them the most arbitrary maxims of Government, and crushed all the projects of the popular party for the restoration of Gillespie and the other members of the Dunfermline presbytery.

He addressed the Assembly in the following pointed manner: "The preservation, the welfare, and the honour of our happy constitution is, I know, so dear to you all, that I cannot but expect, that in the management of the important affairs which are to come under your consideration at this time, you will carefully observe, as you have hitherto done, a just medium betwixt an undue remission of your authority on the one hand, and unnecessary severities on the other. As all acts of severity are disagreeable,



even when absolutely requisite for the good of society,—by such a due mixture of justice and mercy, you will act a consistent part worthy of yourselves, disappoint the hopes of your enemies, and give satisfaction to all your friends. How much soever you may have differed in your sentiments from one another, as to the expediency of interposing the authority of the church *in a certain case*, in this all ought to agree, that since that authority has been interposed, it must, in consistency with the established rules of society, be supported; for whatever is fixed by a majority, becomes the common concern of each member to support, (although against his own private opinion,) as it is upon this foundation alone that society can subsist. But I shall sincerely rejoice if the acknowledgment and submission of that offending brother can pave the way for his being again received, consistently with your honour, into the bosom of the church.”

When the case of Gillespie and the other brethren suspended from their judicative capacity came on, much interest was felt as to the result; but alas! a considerable number of the trimmers had withdrawn, and the popular party, who had the majority in the House, suffered the constitutionalists to carry their measure, and win the smile of the royal commissioner. Several overtures were read from synods and presbyteries, embodying a revocation of the sentence of last Assembly.

In discussing the merits of the case, the Assembly kept their eye primarily fixed upon the condition prescribed by the Earl of Leven,—“the acknowledgment and submission of that offending brother (to) pave the way for his being restored.” The moderator was particularly desired to inquire if there was any application lodged, either in court or with any member, for the condemned brethren of the Dunfermline presbytery being reponed. Dr. Erskine said something on behalf of Hunter, Daling, and Spence, which was not considered satisfactory, but not a syllable was said in reference to Gillespie, either as to his acknowledgment of guilt or his wish to be reponed. A long debate followed on the question, whether he should be reponed or not.

The constitutional party contended strenuously for supporting the authority of the church, that he must make an acknowledgment of his guilt,—and that by getting a meeting-house erected for himself, preaching after his deposition, and baptizing children belonging to persons from other parishes without proper certificates from their ministers, he had evidently given up all thoughts of re-

uniting himself with the Church of Scotland. The popular party, on the other hand, dwelt upon the unconstitutional nature of his sentence, the illegality of his trial, and the persecution he was suffering for the sake of conscience. They insisted it was monstrous to require a man to confess his guilt, when he declared that what he was doing was according to the word of God. They endeavoured to take off the edge of his apparent rebellion in preaching, by pointing the attention of the Assembly to the nature of the sentence passed upon him, which in some measure allowed it; for, while the Assembly had deposed him in the name of the Lord Jesus, yet in a subsequent clause they deposed him merely from the exercise of the ministry "in this Church," by which was to be understood the Church of Scotland. His baptizing of children from the parishes of other ministers without certificates, they did not consider schismatical, but in strict accordance with the old and liberal constitution of the church, which allowed of such freedom of communion in sealing ordinances. They also urged, that the reponing of Gillespie would prevent the growth of the Secession, and the *rise of a new schism* in the church.

The overture which they presented to the Assembly has been preserved, and, therefore, we are at no loss to understand the course of policy which they were disposed to follow. Their overture was in the following terms:—"The General Assembly, taking into their serious consideration the overtures transmitted to them by many synods and presbyteries of this church, complaining of the conduct of last Assembly, with relation to Mr. Thomas Gillespie, minister of the gospel at Carnock, and the other brethren of the presbytery of Dunfermline; and requesting that some effectual method may be taken, not only for redressing the past, but preventing the like proceedings in time coming—together with a petition from the parish of Carnock, to have their minister restored to them. And considering likewise, that there cannot be a more intolerable grievance, or greater infringement upon the rights and liberties of mankind, than that pains, penalties, and forfeitures should be inflicted upon any person, without the authority of a special law, or fixed and certain usage, and without a formal and solemn trial.—That the civil rights of this part of the united kingdom, by the claim of right, and the many good and wholesome laws made since the happy Revolution, are fully secured against any unlawful or precipitant attack. That in conformity to these salutary laws of the state, the national

Assemblies of this church, in whom not only the power of suspending ministers from the exercise of their office, but also of depriving them of their benefice, by a sentence of deposition, resides in the dernier resort, very wisely thought proper, for preventing their being in a situation uncertain and precarious, to fix and ascertain the grounds of censure, and the form of process to that effect; and that in the most explicit and distinct manner. Particularly, it was provided by the General Assembly 1697, that before any acts of a public nature can pass, the opinion of presbyteries must first be sought, and their approbation obtained. In consequence whereof, the several presbyteries of the kingdom, having transmitted their opinions to the General Assembly 1707, a form of process was then drawn up and enacted, *nemine contradicente*, by the authority of that Assembly, as the rule of procedure in all matters of censure or scandal, and which continues to be the standing law for governing ecclesiastical courts at this day.—In which form of process two things are expressly enacted, first, ‘ That nothing shall be admitted by any church-judicatory as the ground of a process for censure, but what hath been declared censurable by the word of God, or some act or universal custom of this church agreeable thereto, cap. 1. par. 4.’—And 2dly, ‘ That after finding ground of process for censure against a minister, the court shall order a citation in writing, either to be delivered to him personally, or to be left at his dwelling-house; with a full copy of the libel, and a list of witnesses’ names to be led in proof of it; allowing him a competent time to give in answers to the libel, and his just defences, and objections to the witnesses; at least ten free days before the day of appearance, cap. 7. par. 5.’—And this Assembly having read over, and considered the proceedings of the last General Assembly, in reference to Mr. Thomas Gillespie, and the other brethren of the presbytery of Dunfermline, and finding that the cause of Mr. Gillespie’s being deposed from the holy ministry, and of the other brethren’s being suspended from the exercise of their judicative capacity, was their declining to give active obedience, in executing a particular order of the Assembly, which they represented they had not freedom in their conscience to comply with.—Which conduct of the said brethren, not being declared censurable by the word of God, or by any act or universal usage of this church, ought not, in terms of the first regulation, to have been admitted as ground of censure.—And the procedure against

the said Mr. Thomas Gillespie, and the other brethren, which, on account of its singularity, ought to have been carried on with peculiar deliberation, being a manifest departure from the second regulation, whereby every minister is entitled to have at least ten free days to make his defences; whereas it appears, from the minutes of last Assembly, that the censured brethren were only called to answer for their conduct upon the twenty-second day of May before noon, and on that very day of their first appearance, the vote passed to depose one; and next morning, Mr. Gillespie being pitched upon, the sentence of deposition was pronounced against him, and the other brethren suspended.—For which reasons, the General Assembly have found, and hereby find, the aforesaid act, inflicting censures upon the said Mr. Gillespie, and the other brethren of the presbytery of Dunfermline, not to have been duly weighed, but to have passed, *per incuriam*, without attending to the foresaid standing rules.—And therefore did, and hereby do, rescind the same, and restore the said Mr. Gillespie to his charge of the parish of Carnock, vacated by his said deposition; and take off the sentence of suspension which was inflicted upon the other brethren.

“But, in regard the members of this church, at present, appear to be divided in opinion, with respect to the standing laws and orders aforesaid,—some inclining, it would seem, to leave it absolutely to the General Assembly to determine at will, the grounds of censuring ministers, even so far as deposition; and that the Assembly should also be at liberty to proceed in the most summary manner in so doing.—While others are of opinion, that this would be of dangerous consequence, as it would render the government of the church arbitrary, and place the ministerial office, and the civil rights belonging to the ministers of the Established church, upon a footing altogether uncertain and precarious.—Therefore the Assembly appoint an overture to be transmitted to the several presbyteries, that they may return their sense and opinion upon this question; so as ministers may be left in no doubt, as to the terms upon which they are received into the Established Church of Scotland, and the grounds upon which they may be deprived of the privileges thereof.”\*

When the vote was taken, whether Mr. Gillespie should be reponed or not, it carried “Not” by a majority of *three*. This

\* An Inquiry into the Powers committed to the General Assemblies of this Church, &c.: 1754. Pp. 43—46.



was a very unexpected issue. Where was now the result of a whole summer's agitation, and of a popularly constituted Assembly, which had easily carried the election of the moderator, and which could have easily reversed all that had been formerly done? It was impossible to prevent persons from saying that "the *throne* was higher than the moderator's chair." The overture was servilely cast out. The sentence on Gillespie was confirmed, and he was left to apply for admission when he saw proper. This sentence was cold as iron and sharp as steel.

It is a very fortunate circumstance that we have been favoured with a holograph letter of Mr. Gillespie's, written a few weeks after the Assembly continued his deposition, inviting an elder to assist him at the sacrament, which he intended to dispense; and in which he enters into the merits of his case, and gives his own views of the matter. The letter is addressed to "Mr. John Laupslay, Tenant at —, near Kilsyth, by Falkirk;" and begins:

"V. D. FRIEND,

"As I understand I am greatly condemned at Glasgow, and no doubt also in other places—for that I did not give in a petition to Assembly, make application for being reponed by writing—a letter to the moderator to be communicate—I give you the following plain and true state of the matter, that you, in whom I have all confidence, as a warm friend to the glorious cause for which I was honoured to suffer, and to me—may have opportunity to do justice to that, and keep me from being unjustly run down where I am not to speak for the cause of Christian liberty, and its confessor, however unworthy. If the truth is but told, I want no more; but am well aware, I have suffered much since May, 1752, by one part of truth, its being told, and another part of it suppressed and concealed, which people did not find it for their purpose to declare, when they expressed a part of the truth and facts.

"I had what I took to be certain evidence before the Assembly met, that, if I wrote any thing to be read in the Assembly, was it ever so little, how strong soever in the way of remonstrance, as some proposed, it would bring me before them in writing, or more probably in person, to have what I had wrote explained; in which event, there was the utmost danger of my being ensnared, especially as I had no call in providence to be there, for

that the Assembly needed nothing from me to pave their way for determining on the general cause respecting me in particular. That the apprehension I should have been brought to the bar of (the) Assembly, had I wrote any thing, is no idle surmise, as it may be called, appears certain from the speech of a pious and zealous well-known member of Assembly, to the following effect: 'I was indeed for a petition, but the speech of a gentleman has let me see what was designed, that had he given in a petition, he was to have been brought to your bar as a delinquent. I am therefore now convinced that it was much better there was no petition.' I think it proper here to add, a gentleman at Edinburgh, whose words in this question I have very good reason to notice, said some days before the Assembly met: 'I would give something to see somewhat under his hand, though it had THE APPEARANCE TO DO HURT.'

"The General Assembly (of) 1752 imposed a sinful term of communion on me, by requiring me to act in direct opposition and contradiction to scripture, the known established principles of the Church of Scotland, the dictates of my own mind, and deposed me because I would not. It would have been sinful in me to take any step toward reunion with the Church by a petition to Assembly, or letter to the moderator to be communicate, saying simply two sentences, doing any the smallest thing directly to them till the sinful term of communion was removed out of the way by the mentioned sentence being reversed.

"The obedience and submission to which I stood bound by my subscription at my admission was, by the substance of the engagement, as well as the Divine authority, *limited* to be according to scripture and the principles of the Church of Scotland. But by the mentioned sentence, absolute obedience to whatever the Assembly should appoint, right or wrong, (as they are acknowledged to be fallible,) was imposed upon me, and required of me under pain of censure; and a high censure was inflicted upon me, because I would not practise and come under the yoke of such illimited blind obedience. Therefore, till submission and obedience were brought back to the former scriptural and Protestant limitation and channel, I could not with a safe conscience do any even the least and smallest thing in the way of application to Assembly, for being re-admitted a member of the Church. I leave it to you to judge whether the mentioned are not good reasons for refusing what was demanded of me, and (whether) it was not unreason-

able, if not cruel, to condemn me because I would (not) do it in contradiction to the plain dictates of my conscience declaring it sinful. It is of importance in the present question, that no mention was made in the meetings of ministers at Linlithgow Bridge, 23d, and Edinburgh 25th June, last year, of an application to be made by me to Assembly anyhow; and that was a new demand made upon me a few weeks before the Assembly met, though they framed their scheme for reforming the Church, putting things on a new footing in it, and reponing me at these meetings. In which I declared my absolute disapprobation of their scheme, because they were not to assist and employ me, as what would fail of any good effect for that reason. Thus, as I did not concur with that scheme, I was under no obligation to do any thing in consequence of it. No petition or application to Assembly was demanded or expected from the Seceders, Mr. Glass, or any other ever deposed not for immorality, and reponed, though none of them ever suffered on so plain, honourable, and important grounds as I. And as my worst enemies required no more than my friends in way of application to Assembly, (though, as more than probable had that been granted, more would have been required,) there is all reason to believe preservation of their honour, and authority of the Church, was the thing in view; and which (a thing of the utmost consequence in the controversy 'twixt them who condemn me, for the part I acted, and me) is put past all doubt by the following facts:—The before-mentioned pious and zealous member of Assembly acknowledged to a near relation of mine, ‘The reasons why they insisted for a petition or a letter to their moderator from me, was to prevent reflection on their brethren of the Assembly 1752: to preserve *their* honour was the true design of it.’ A minister, a member of Assembly, told me, ‘The true reason why the mentioned demand was made on me, was to preserve the authority of the Church, whatever was said.’ He added, he never saw a member of Assembly, nor believed there was one, but who was convinced, had I been reponed to Carnock, I would have returned to it;—an evidence, the reports I had changed my principles, was become an Independent, a Seceder, would not return though I was reponed to the Church, had not the smallest influence on the minds of the members of Assembly, whatever to the contrary may be pretended. You will perceive, maintaining the honour of the Assembly 1752, and the authority of the Church, (in that I noticed,)

is quite inconsistent with the due support of the glorious cause for which I suffered; and if the first stands, the last is let fall to the ground. Mr. Daling, one of the three members of the presbytery of Dunfermline suspended from kirk courts, when in Edinburgh the two first days of the Assembly, asked many ministers at the cross, who were pressing our giving in a petition, if they would give it in to Assembly, were they in our case, and he never met with one who said he would. Though 'tis pretended I was not reponed because I would not say to the Assembly I desired it, the true reason was, our friends in it broke among themselves,—their measures were disconcerted,—some of them owned the hand of God was in it, for they had a majority of ten or twelve, and might have carried any thing. Several did not vote 'repone,' because they disapproved of the state of the vote. I lament the loss of Mr. Robe as very great.

“The Lord's Supper is to be dispensed by me at Dunfermline, last Sabbath, 29th day of July, N. S. If no minister will assist me, I am to do it alone. Be you, and Christian friends to be, concerned (that) the Lord may be remarkably present, and make up all wants in the enjoyment of him. I wrote reasons of my conduct to Mr. John Steven, shoemaker, opposite to the Trades' Hospital, Glasgow. As I have no acquaintance with him but by seeing him once or twice at Kilsyth, you will please let me know if I am safe with him. Write me immediately on your receiving this that it came to your hand, and write me freely if any difficulty remains in your or the minds of other my friends, about what is contained in this letter. My love to inquiring friends.

I am yours very affectionately,

(Signed)

THOS. GILLESPIE.”

CARNOCK, 23d June, 1753.

Gillespie was now excluded. The arbitrary authority of the church courts was supported. The moderate party were firmly seated in power. The popular party were now broken and scattered, and tamely laid the rights and liberties of the people at the feet of royalty. Since that time the free constitution of the Church of Scotland has been in ruins, and liberty has found a resting-place in what have been often sarcastically called, the conventicles or BARNs of dissenters.



## CHAPTER VIII.

### GILLESPIE A DISSENTER.

It is often said by churchmen, that Gillespie was a dissenter against his will, and that he would gladly have continued in connection with the Church of Scotland. In one acceptation this is true, but it is not true in the acceptation in which it is usually put forward. He had his own ideas of what he thought the Church of Scotland should be, and what he understood her constitution really was when received within her pale, as a dissenting minister from England, but he had no idea of continuing in connection with her, when her arbitrary enactments as an Establishment were fairly worked out and applied. He held strenuously, "that a sinful term of communion had been imposed upon him by the Assembly of 1752, in requiring him to act in direct opposition and contradiction to scripture—the known Established principles of the Church of Scotland—the dictates of his own mind," and in deposing him because he would not comply. He had joined the church, testifying against the power of the civil magistrate, in religious matters, as laid down in the Confession of Faith. His obedience to church courts he considered "as limited by the word of God and his own conscience." He considered patronage as "antichristian,"—"all persecution as sinful," and that "the kingdom of Christ was totally distinct from the kingdoms of this world." Nay, the party in the church with whom he acted, went even so far as to consider "a civil Establishment, and the annexing to it of civil emoluments, a mere state arrangement, no way essentially connected with a gospel church, and that to inflict ecclesiastical censures upon ministers who would not carry out a mere state arrangement, was stamping with the image of Christ what should bear the image and superscription of Cæsar." If Gillespie had gotten these points granted him, he would have sought connection with the Church of Scotland

again, but, what in that case would have remained of the Establishment but the name? Till he obtained the limitations which he wished about the power of church courts, he could "not apply for admission with a safe conscience;" and as the power of the state-church was never relaxed, neither did he ever again seek connection with it.

It is difficult to determine what plan Mr. Gillespie had marked out for himself, when he constituted a church and began to dispense religious ordinances. His design was to maintain Christian liberty in opposition to church-despotism; but how he was to do this he had not made up his mind, farther than that he would not seek connection with the Church of Scotland, which was now become so arbitrary in its proceedings. He laid down this principle, "that the authority of the church was quite inconsistent with the glorious cause for which he suffered; and if the first stands, the last is let fall to the ground." He therefore resolved to stand alone, and maintain the liberty of 'the Church of God which he had purchased with his blood.'

His having been ordained in connection with the Independent churches in England, would partly pave the way for his anomalous position. Though he was at one time "a little tinctured with Independent principles, yet he afterwards heartily approved of the presbyterian scheme," and it does not appear that he ever mooted joining the English Independents. He was evidently a very moderate presbyterian, and wished church courts rather to be consultative meetings, where a considerable latitude of opinion was allowed, than legislative and authoritative judicatories. It is remarkable that his descendants have kept very steadfast to his example, and that the authority of the Relief synod has ever been mild and lenient, even to a fault.

The liberality of Gillespie's principles as to church communion, was very different from the close sectarian principles, which were then finding favour throughout the country. When he proceeded to dispense the Lord's Supper, he took as his motto this truly Christian sentiment—"I hold communion with all that visibly hold the Head, and with such only." He did not excommunicate the Seceders or the Independents, or even the Church of Scotland that cast him out, but kept without bigotry to his safe, simple, and scriptural principle. Such was the term of communion which he stated the Saturday before the tokens were distributed.

In these liberal views he had probably been indoctrinated in

England, confirmed by Whitefield, of whom he was a sincere admirer, and countenanced by many of the popular leaders at that time in the Church of Scotland. Open communion among the protestant churches was the old doctrine of the Reformation, and close communion was one of the novelties which a worse state of things was beginning to introduce. "After the Reformation, *ministerial communion* was in almost universal practice among protestant churches, and in England and Scotland as much as in any other country. One of the first controversies about *Christian communion*, was created by the English exiles at Frankfort in Queen Mary's time, who endeavoured to exclude from their communion all who were unwilling to adopt the English service-book. They contended for it with as much pertinacity as if it had received the sanction of Christ and his apostles, though it had been then very recently altered and new-modelled by Edward VI., who was just dead. What is remarkable, they applied to John Calvin for his advice, which they did not follow, —or for his sanction, which they did not obtain." \*

Gillespie applied to his old friends in the Establishment for ministerial aid in dispensing the Lord's Supper. He did not obtain it however. From his letter to Laupsley it appears that, from the very first, they had made up their minds "not to assist or employ him while he was under a sentence of deposition; and though he denounced it as what would provoke the displeasure of God," they had more dread of the displeasure of the Assembly. Being denied by his old friends in the church, it does not appear he asked aid from any other quarter.† To whom else could he have gone? The Seceders were bound up by their terms of communion adopted at their disruption with Whitefield, so that they could not aid him. The English Dissenters were at a great distance. With the Glassites or Cameronians the attempt would have been vain, as their communion-table was fenced round with

\* Dr. Erskine's life, p. 137. Appendix, p. 504.

† Church writers usually strive to represent Mr. Gillespie as a churchman, because he asked aid of church ministers. His catholic principles did not prevent him from doing it. Many of them pretended to hold the same principles for which he suffered; but they either wanted honesty or fortitude to make common cause with an old friend in the time of need. Gillespie was not insensible to the treatment which he received from the popular party; and, therefore, when speaking one day in a sermon concerning the usage which he had received from both sides of the church, he said with emotion—"I think I can say at my leisure, what David said in his haste—all men are liars."

many peculiarities which compelled them to dwell alone. He, therefore, took the whole labour of a sacramental solemnity upon his own shoulders, and preached all the usual sermons on Thursday, Saturday, Sabbath, and Monday. He had asked the prayers of God's people to be earnest at a throne of grace in his behalf; and he felt, to his comfortable experience, that his grace was sufficient for him.

It was true what Whitefield said at his deposition—it brought him into notice. He who had formerly been a retired country minister, was now an object of universal sympathy and regard. His church was crowded. Several of the most respectable persons in Dunfermline joined it. Persons came from a distance to hear him, gave him their countenance, and sustained him in his struggle for Christian liberty, and the doctrines of salvation by grace to which he was sincerely attached. “Crowds of serious persons flocked to his communion from Edinburgh, Glasgow, and various other quarters, at the dispensation of the Lord's Supper;” \* and as it was according to his principles to give and receive testimonials of character for occasional fellowship from the Establishment and other Christian churches, his sacraments were literally seasons of love among the genuine followers of Christ, though they differed from each other about the lesser matters of forms and church order. Erskine says, “he took the whole service upon himself, which he did thirteen times in about five or six years, preaching every time no less than nine sermons, and exhorting seven or eight tables, besides a variety of private work. This is the more surprising, as he esteemed it criminal to serve the Lord with that which cost him nothing; and, therefore, even in this busy period, he continued as formerly, fully and distinctly to write all his sermons and exhortations at tables.” † He excelled in serving tables, because he excelled in experimental preaching. As an instance of his saying strong appropriate things as circumstances required—a person was very much distressed about approaching the table. He made two or three attempts; and yet his feelings always overpowered him, and made him fall back again into his seat. Gillespie noticed him; and, with great delicacy and adroitness, said, “If there is any person here that is waiting for a frame, Satan has cast a chain about his neck, let him come forward and break it.”

\* Quart. Mag.

† Erskine's Notice prefixed to Essay on Temptation.



As Gillespie was very apt not to husband his strength in the table services, and to forget that he had the evening sermon awaiting him, his brother Thomas, from Edinburgh, would often sit behind him and warn him to spare himself. Such a caution was indispensable. His frame was not adequate to the labour of such continuous speaking. On one occasion he altogether broke down. His elders, however, brought him a little wine, cheered him on; and, after a short pause, he finished his Herculean task. Such onerous services did not make him sacrifice the dictates of conscience, and the cause of religious liberty, at the shrine of bodily ease. He took no steps to be restored to the church; and it does not appear that any means were employed by the popular party to have the sentence of deposition removed from off him.

The party, indeed, were now sadly crushed and diminished. The Rev. Mr. M'Laurin of Glasgow, who had interposed his vigorous efforts "to stop the progress of those arbitrary measures which led to the deposing of ministers who would not assist at violent settlements, as being the dismal presage of the decay of vital religion, and the pulling to pieces of the ecclesiastical constitution of the church,"\* had died, 1754, very soon after one of the ablest of his pamphlets on the subject had issued from the press. His loss to the party was incalculable. He was in himself a host. The author of the *Ecclesiastical Characteristics* (Wotherspoon) was set down by the Moderates "as a man with a bad heart," for writing such a bitter satire on their preaching and policy, and was himself so sadly persecuted, and his elevation in the church so completely stopped, that he found it prudent to retire after a time to America. Walker of Dundonald was far away from Gillespie; and, being a country minister, he could only now and then be in Edinburgh. Dr. John Erskine, the son of Gillespie's earliest patron in Carnock, was only a young man; and though now in Culross, yet he did not venture to rouse public opinion in his behalf, though he continued his friend till his death. The probability is, that he had not escaped himself altogether unscathed on account of his latitudinarian views about Whitefield. The person who, of all others, had early befriended Gillespie was Dr. Webster; but he was too much engaged about the widow's scheme, and planning improvements

\* Gillies' *Life of M'L.*, p. 5.

about Edinburgh, to be continuous in his efforts on behalf of a retired, studious, and somewhat stubborn brother. The consequence was, that the deposed minister of Carnock was left to stand alone, and must have sunk under the multiplicity of his labours, had he not been sustained by the grace of God and a good conscience.

His tried friend, President Edwards, though far away, did not indeed forsake him. Having heard that the Assembly had refused to remove the sentence of deposition, he addressed to him an affectionate and cheering letter. His own circumstances were at the time full of trouble. He refers to their being fellow-sufferers,—asks the benefit of Gillespie's prayers,—and writes to him in a strain which must have been sweet and consoling to suffering piety.

“ STOCKBRIDGE, *October 18th, 1753.*

“ REV. AND DEAR SIR,—The last November I wrote you a letter, and desired Mr. Foxcroft to put up with it, for you, one of my Answers to Mr. Williams. After that, in the latter part of the winter, I received a letter from you, dated June 15th, 1752, with Milton on Hirelings; and duplicates of a Letter from a Gentleman in Town, &c.; and Answers to the Reasons of Dissent, &c. I now return you my hearty thanks for these things. Since that, I have received letters from Mr. M'Laurin and Mr. Erskine, with various pamphlets and prints relative to your extraordinary affair. I think, dear Sir, although your sufferings are like to continue, the General Assembly having refused to restore you to your former station and employments in the Church of Scotland; yet they are attended with many manifestations of the goodness, and fatherly kindness, and favour of the great Governor of the world, in the many alleviations and supporting circumstances of your persecutions; in that so many of God's ministers and people have appeared to be so much concerned for you; and have so zealously, and yet so properly, exerted themselves in your behalf; and have so many ways given their testimony to the goodness of the cause in which you suffer, and the unrighteousness of the hardships which you have been subjected to; and that even so great a part of the General Assembly, themselves, have, in effect, given this testimony for you, there being but a very small majority, but what openly appeared for the taking off of the censure of the former Assembly, without any recantation on your part, or so much as an application from

you, desiring them so to do. You have some peculiar reasons to rejoice in your sufferings, and to glorify God on account of them. They having been so greatly taken notice of by so many of the people of God, and there being so much written concerning them, tends to render them, with their circumstances, and particularly the patience and meekness with which you have suffered, so much the more extensively and durably to the glory of the name of your blessed Lord, for whom you suffer. God is rewarding you for laying a foundation, in what has been said and done and written concerning your sufferings, for glory to his own name, and honour to you, in his church, in future generations. Your name will doubtless be mentioned hereafter with peculiar respect, on the account of these sufferings, in ecclesiastical history; as they are now the occasion of a peculiar notice, which saints and angels in heaven take of you, and of their praises to God on your account; and will be the occasion of a peculiar reward, which God will bestow upon you, when you shall be united to their assembly.

“As we, dear Sir, have great reason to sympathize, one with another, with peculiar tenderness; our circumstances being in many respects similar; so I hope I shall partake of the benefit of your fervent prayers for me. Let us then endeavour to help one another, though at a great distance, in travelling through this wide wilderness; that we may have the more joyful meeting in the land of rest, when we have finished our weary pilgrimage.”\*

The broad Atlantic rolled between Gillespie and Edwards. When he looked around there was none at home to help him. In the midst of Christian brethren he stood alone; with some an object of pity, and with others, of scorn. In the hand of God he was a sign to the people. The fact of Gillespie standing six years alone, and supporting the cause of Christ in every respect with great respectability and increasing usefulness, served at the time a purpose in the divine economy, which has never been sufficiently noticed or prized. Dissent was in a great measure new in Scotland. It was scarcely believed by any that the church could exist without the aid of the State. The Seceders had indeed existed more than twenty years. But then, they had come off from the church a numerous body at once. The

\* Memoirs of Edwards by Dwight, p. 203.

Erskines and Wilson and Moncrieff were no ordinary men. Several of their congregations, that had seceded with them, were among the largest and most respectable in Scotland. They were bound together by a covenant-bond, which gave them, for a long time, great compactness and power. They claimed to themselves the title of the true Church of Scotland; so that their existence was in some way or other supposed to spring from a union with the State. A covenanted king, in theory at least, spread his shield over the battlements of their Zion. It was, however, all a fiction. They were in reality a voluntary and self-sustained church, could they only have thought it, from their very commencement. But in the case of Gillespie the delusion was effectually dispelled. The church of Christ in his case was seen simply resting upon the Rock of ages. He had scarcely the ordinary measure of this world's policy. He was guileless as a child. His talents and acquirements were very respectable; but they were not of the very highest order. He was not a man of bustle. He shunned notoriety. He was no political intriguer. He had never entered deeply into ecclesiastical business. He was neither wealthy nor connected with the great. His church was small; his congregation a few farmers, cottagers, and servants, from the country, with a sprinkling of a few pious and respectable families from Dunfermline. In these untoward circumstances he yet had confidence, in the face of ecclesiastical authority and of a frowning royal commissioner, to set up his *tent* and preach the gospel by the way-side; and abundant success crowned his labours. His eye was single. He was zealous and faithful. He spent himself for the good of souls. He wrestled for the liberty and purity of Christ's church; and the Lord gathered friends around him, and he lacked nothing. When deposed, he had even refused to take the current half year's stipend, because he had not fully laboured for it, but the people did not permit him to suffer loss, because of his scrupulous honesty. His lack was amply supplied. His congregation voluntarily fixed his stipend at £600 Scots;\* allowing him also £60 Scots for a house, and otherwise consulting his comfort, and carrying on religious ordinances. At his summer sacraments the people would collect from £110 to £120 Scots. At that era these were large sums. The fountain of Christian

\* A Pound Scots is equal to 1s. 8d. sterling.



benevolence required only to be struck, to flow copiously for his support. He was a striking example at the moment when such an example was needed, to teach the oppressed heritage of God, that they had the means of their deliverance in their own hand, and that they could both set up and support a gospel church, without covenants, acts of parliament, or state-endowments. When this lesson became perfectly apparent, assistance was graciously sent to Gillespie, and from a quarter which, of all others, must have been to him the sweetest and most endearing. It was doubtless connected with many touching recollections.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE REV. THOMAS BOSTON'S ACCESSION.

THE Rev. Thomas Boston, Jedburgh, was the first accession to the standard of religious liberty, as planted and unfurled by Gillespie. His father was the Rev. Thomas Boston, Ettrick, author of the *Fourfold State*, and of many other theological works which will be read with avidity so long as a taste for religion is felt, and the English language continues to be understood. The father evidently nurtured his son to become a dissenter; and he himself, as to his religious opinions, was in many respects the child of Providence, and in nothing more than in his liberal and enlightened opinions as to ecclesiastical government. The facts are interesting, and show how we are insensibly moulded by the unseen hand of God.

Boston, senior, was a native of the town of Dunse. When very young, he learned what it was to be imprisoned for religion; and the lesson seems not to have been lost upon him, as he retained, during the whole of his life, a strong abhorrence of all arbitrary and persecuting measures in support of religion. "My father," says he, "being a noneonformist during the time of Prelacy, he suffered on that head to imprisonment and spoiling of his goods. When I was a little boy, I lay in the prison of Dunse with him to keep him company; the which I have often looked on as an earnest of what might be abiding me; but hitherto I have not had that trial. My mother once paying to one Alexander Martin, sheriff-depute, the sum of £50 Scots, as the fine of her imprisoned husband for his nonconformity, desired of him an abatement; whereupon, he taking up a pint stoup standing on the table, therewith broke in pieces a part of a tobacco-pipe lying thereon, bidding the devil beat him as small as that pipe-stopple, if there should be any abatement of the sum."\* A

\* *Memoirs*, p. 6.

child reared in these circumstances could scarcely but tremble for the exercise of all civil power connected with the kingdom of Christ.

The Revolution under William, Prince of Orange, 1688, swept away Prelacy, and re-established in Scotland the presbyterian form of church government. Boston, after many outward trials and inward struggles which were greatly sanctified to him, was licensed to preach the gospel in connection with the Establishment, 1697; was first ordained in the parish of Simprin, 1699; and was afterwards, in 1707, translated to Ettrick, where he died, 1732. He belonged from principle to the orthodox and popular side of the church, and was greatly borne down by the dominant and high-flying Establishment party, who were as jealous of his ultra liberalism as they were of his supposed ultra views of sovereign grace, which they, at a meeting of Assembly during the Marrow controversy, condemned as Antinomian.

His views certainly squared very ill with the doctrine of an Establishment, though he was a member and minister of it. He believed that "the Lord Jesus was the only King and Head of his church; that the kingdom of Christ was a kingdom within a kingdom; a spiritual kingdom distinct from, and independent of, the magistrate."\* "Men may distinguish as they will, but as a body with more heads than one, is a monster in nature, the scripture is plain; the church is no such monster, Eph. iv. 4. 5, *one body, one Lord.*"† He did not merely object to the harsh exercise of patronage, but he considered it in every form anti-scriptural. "I do believe, as I have all along from my youth, that the Christian people have of *divine* right the power of choosing their own pastors."‡ Like many other ministers of that period, he had "an undefined horror at separation, which led him to regard almost every other ecclesiastical evil as trifling;" but he certainly looked forward to the time when the corrupting influence of a national church, along with the national church itself, though fondly clung to, should be removed. The artless and sincere confession of his heart is very striking: "The decay of love among the professors of Christianity is most visible at this day: and I must say I despair of seeing due love among church-members restored, as long as the church among us is so mixed with, and so little separated from the world, *and until the*

\* Memoirs, p. 282.

† Sermons on Communion, p. 143. Edm. 1752.

‡ The Mind of Thomas Boston on Patronage, p. 3.

*church be more distinguished from the nation, for as fond as we have been of a national church.* God separated them in the late times by the fire of persecution, and then this love flamed among them. Peace being restored, the church even mixed again with the world lying in wickedness, and that love died out of course.”\* The principal source from which he received his light as to the evils of a national Establishment of religion, was his reading Fulwood’s Discourse on the Visible Church. “From that time,” says he, “I had little fondness for national churches, strictly and properly so called, as of equal latitude with the nations,—and wished for an amendment of the constitution of our own church as to the membership thereof.”† The good man was thus groping his way out of all civil enactments on behalf of the church of Christ, and of persons claiming membership because they were parishioners.

As might have been expected from his own tender and evangelical spirit, and from the sufferings of his father in Dunse jail for a good conscience, Boston was very liberal and tolerant of all good men. He disliked exceedingly the narrow and bigoted principles of the followers of MacMillan and Hepburn, who were to be found in considerable numbers in the parish of Ettrick, and in his sermon against them “on the danger of schism,” he pleads very earnestly, and at great length, for the principles of free communion, both ‘laik’ and ministerial, as taught in the Confession of Faith.‡

The affair of Professor Simson, when Boston stood alone in the Assembly complaining of the inadequate censure; that of the ‘Trust;’§ also, when he for years stood and defended his friend Wilson of Maxton,—the controversy about the Marrow of Modern Divinity, when he saw the doctrine of free grace condemned, and was himself, along with others, rebuked at the bar of the

\* Sermons on Com., p. 157.

† Memoirs, p. 177.

‡ Pages 15—26.

§ THE TRUST.—This was the title of a Sermon preached before the synod of Merse and Teviotdale, by the Rev. Gabriel Wilson, in April, 1721, “On the glorious gospel truth, the justification and salvation of lost and undone sinners by free grace without works, through faith in a crucified Saviour.” The synod thought he carried the doctrine of salvation by grace too high, to the discouragement of repentance and holiness. For this sermon he stood a panel before four successive synods, and four committees of synod, and the General Assembly; but he was never found guilty of any error or erroneous expression. There was just too much of “grace” in it for the half Arminian taste of the clerical audience.



Assembly for holding it,—and the more general and rigorous enforcement of patronage which he lived to see commencing, might have their influence in weaning his affections from the Church of Scotland, as well as its deplored corrupting influence upon “church membership,” in sadly mingling up the church and the world.

In writing to the presbytery of Selkirk, three months before his death, and when he was unable to attend its meeting, convened for the purpose of considering an overture which was to regulate elections where the patron did not present—taking the right of voting from the people, and giving it to elders, heads of families, and heritors, being Protestants—he denounces the whole measure, and the infatuation of the church, in the severest terms. “This church hath now groaned long under the yoke of patronages: but who can, without breaking sorrow of heart, stand and see the poor remains in that point, left her by the laws, disposed of in the house of her friends, in manner proposed by the said act, to the utter enslaving of the body of the Christian people, in that their spiritual concern of calling their ministers? How naked is that quality of heritors being Protestants! ’Tis obvious, that under it the people may have men brought in to choose their ministers for them, who are known enemies to the government both in church and state, are none of our communion, yea, excommunicate for their notorious wickedness, are Arians, Socinians, Deists, and what not, except Papists? So that I cannot help thinking, but the method proposed in the foresaid overture, for planting of congregations, hath a native tendency to sap our constitution, break this church in pieces, fill her pulpits with naughty ministers, and to mar the success of the glorious gospel, and ruin the interests of true religion among us: for which causes I declare myself altogether against passing of the said act or overture into a standing act, and durst not in presbytery or assembly vote in favour of it for a thousand worlds.”\*

What would have been the effect upon the mind of Boston of such measures, had he lived to see them in operation, no man can tell. Many have conjectured he would have been driven out of the church, and renounced her connection. It is certain that his two friends, Davidson of Galashiels and Wilson of Maxton,

\* Mind of Boston, p. 4.

who outlived him, and who were of the same mind with him on all church matters, became so disgusted with the violent measures of the day, and received such increasing light about the spiritual and independent constitution of the church of Christ, that they renounced her sacramental communion, though they were never libelled for following divisive courses nor expelled from their pulpits. "After the death of his friend Mr. Boston, which happened in May 1732, and the proceedings of the Assembly that year, in restoring patronages, and refusing petitions of above forty ministers, and many hundred Christian people, so much as a reading, Mr. Davidson's sentiments seem to have undergone a considerable change; though it was not till 1735 or 1737, that he proceeded to act upon it. Till that time he had regularly dispensed the Lord's Supper every year, but from that period he never administered that ordinance among his people, though he still continued to preach and baptize, and punctually visited and catechised their families. Mr. Wilson, who had adopted similar sentiments to those of his friend, acted in the same manner. They formed a church on the Congregational or Independent plan, which met at Maxton, and frequently observed the Lord's Supper on Sabbath evenings, when Mr. Davidson could get down from Gala-shiels. The number of those who associated with him was about twenty-four. Thus he went on for the last twenty years of his life, no man forbidding him. He still lived in friendly habits with his brethren, and preached for them on week-days at the Lord's Supper, but never on the Sabbath. He also obeyed the appointments of presbytery. He expressed a willingness to give up his charge, as he could not perform all the services for his people which his connection with them required, but they would not hear of it: and his brethren of the presbytery were equally willing he should remain in his parish, and attend only to those parts of his office he felt himself at liberty to perform. As none others took up the matter, he was never brought under the censure of the church; whether it were mildness, or prudence, or indifference, so it was, no notice was taken of Mr. Wilson's and his conduct by the ecclesiastical courts; they remained unmolested to the day of their death."\*

These things which took place with the minister of Ettrick and his friends, and the opinions particularly which were held by Boston

\* Gospel Truth, by the Rev. John Brown, Whitburn. Ed. 1831, p. 163.

himself, are necessary to be understood, else the dissent of his son from the Establishment appears an isolated fact, which may be traced up to humour, as it has often been, rather than to the influence of principle and growing convictions. Nursed among such men, it would have been a miracle if young Thomas had not imbibed their sentiments. After the death of his father he succeeded to the pastorate of Ettrick, of which he continued minister about sixteen years. In a volume of Essays, written about the close of this period, and two of which were published by his son Michael after his death, he speaks very disparagingly, indeed, of the first establishment of Christianity by Constantine: "We find the emperor Constantine was so very sensible how much the simplicity of the Christian institution prejudiced the Gentiles against it, that when he made it the national religion, he did, at the same time, deck and adorn it with the spoils of the heathen temples: and thus, instead of conforming the world to Christianity, he made Christianity conformed to the mode and fashion of the world. Hence Christianity, under him, did not prevail over the empire by its own power and energy, but by his power and policy; for, when he built magnificent temples for the Christian worship, and enriched and exalted the clergy, and when the profession of that religion was the way to worldly honour and preferment, there was nothing wonderful in its spreading both speedily and universally. Hereby, indeed, the reproach of the Christians among the heathen was taken away; but something infinitely worse succeeded to it: for they became a reproach to their own religion, and as its outward splendour and gaiety increased, its inward power and influence proportionably decreased."\*

Mr. Boston (afterwards of the Relief) was translated from Ettrick to the parish of Oxnam; and shortly after his induction, 1753, he published his father's Sermon on Schism, already noticed, with a preface of considerable length. Boston, senior, had preached it against the MacMillanites, and Boston, junior, published it evidently against the principles of the Seceders. His preface is pretty pungent. It lets out the fact, however, that he had even then been himself thinking of the happy effects of a secession from the church on liberal principles. "I have sometimes thought," says he, "that were a secession from the Established church managed with prudence and temper, and with the

\* Essay 1., p. 21.

sole view of promoting Christianity, it might be of considerable use." "My father was very tenacious of what he judged truth, while at the same time he could love, esteem, and honour his brethren that differed from him, and *very freely hold communion with them.*" To enforce this freedom of communion against those close and exclusive principles which were then gaining ground in the Secession, in virtue of their lamentable disagreement about the swearing of the burgess oath, and their excommunicating of each other on account it, was the main drift of the preface. He lifts up his testimony in no measured terms against "their delivering so many of their brethren into the hands of the devil," and then lays down his own principles of catholic communion. "As serious Christians are agreed in the essentials of our holy religion, even though they should differ in opinion about lesser matters, this ought not to divide them in affection, nor can such differences be justly pled as a sufficient cause for that monstrous thing schism in the church of Christ. Indeed, should any man deny the doctrine of original sin, the decrees of God, and, in the business of salvation, ascribe more to man's free-will than to God's free grace; should he laugh at justification through the imputed righteousness of Christ, and sneer at the doctrine of the saints' perseverance; especially, should he deny a trinity of persons in the Godhead;"—with all such as denied these, the distinguishing doctrines of revealed religion, he considered it no bigotry not to hold communion; but "he desired to love all those, of whatsoever denomination they be, that love our Lord Jesus Christ."\* Now, as these were the principles of Boston when he was minister of the parish of Oxnam, it need not be matter of surprise that they were brought out more decidedly when circumstances conspired to do it, and that they became the leading features of the denomination of which he was afterwards one of the principal founders.

In the year 1755, Jedburgh, which is near to Oxnam, became vacant. The town and country had their eye and heart set upon Boston to be their future pastor. The Crown was the patron; but the Marquis of Lothian, who was not on good terms with Boston, was the nobleman who would likely have the disposal of the charge. The sky not appearing very clear, the elders took the strong step of entering into a written compact a few weeks

\* Preface to Schism.



after the vacancy occurred, in which they “unanimously agree and resolve, (through the strength of divine grace,) to stand and fall together in the election or voice of a minister for this parish, against all solicitations, threats, or bribes whatsoever, or from whomsoever, and against all intrusion that may be attempted on said parish by any minister whatsoever; and that we shall cleave and adhere firmly to the majority of this parish in the choice as aforesaid.”\* This was a powerful confederation, and, having entered into it, they instantly proceeded to procure votes for Mr. Boston.

These preconcerted measures were trodden in the dust. A presentation to the benefice was granted by the king in favour of Mr. John Bonar, minister at Cockpen, a grandson of Bonar of Torphichen,—and who was, in every respect, worthy of a family which, for generations, has been an honour to the Church of Scotland. The league, however, was not to be broken in this way. Mr. Boston was the man of their choice; whereas Bonar came by a presentation, with the elders and the great majority of the parish opposing him, aggravated by the fact that he had always hitherto opposed violent settlements. In the Assembly, to which the cause was carried, several members expressed their apprehensions of serious consequences were the settlement, amid an exasperated people, to be carried forward. The Lord Advocate found it wise to fall from the presentation, that peace might be restored to the place. Even the General Assembly, with all its reverence for church authority, did not venture to enjoin the translation; and Mr. Bonar having got a presentation and call to Perth, was removed out of the way, and the ground was left clear for the Crown again to issue another presentation. This was teaching the people to feel their own strength, and, if they were not to be gratified with the man for whom they had already given their voices, it was wretched policy. It was making a breach to allow the sea to roll in its waves.

The people were not allowed to remain long ignorant of the fact, that they were to have no redress of their grievances; and that, if they were formerly chastised with whips, they were now to be chastised with scorpions. Patronage was the little finger in the presentation of Mr. Bonar, but it was thicker than a man's loins in the presentation of Mr. Douglas of Kenmore, which im-

\* Scots Mag., 1756, p. 247. Annals.

mediately followed. He was the object of their universal contempt and abhorrence. The principal heritors, the provost, and most of the councillors, were adherents to the call of Mr. Bonar; but the presbytery of Jedburgh, the magistrates of the town, and the whole parish except "*five*," openly declared against Douglas. The opposition was universal. The commission and the Assembly had the subject once and again before them. The translation had to be prosecuted in the name of the Assembly's commission. The presbytery would not act. They would not be accessory to a single step of the procedure. They even protested against the commission, and complained to the Assembly. Their language is terse, and demands a place, as showing the sacrilegious nature of civil authority exerted within the bosom of the church of Christ. "The commission have ordered the presbytery to proceed in the transportation of Mr. Douglas, according to the rules of the church; when all the rules of the church forbid it. They must transmit the presentation, and the few subscriptions for the presentee, under the name of a call from the parish; when the whole parish, except five, are openly declaring against him. They cannot make out a process of transportation, without reasons to support it; when they cannot find one for it, and all the reason in the world against it. When he comes to be admitted, he must make a solemn declaration of his steadfast adherence, not only to the doctrine and worship, but the whole discipline of the Church of Scotland, as founded on and agreeable to the word of God; when it is evident he could never come there but by the breach or neglect of some of the most important articles of it: That zeal for the glory of God, love to Jesus Christ, and a desire of saving souls, are his chief motives and inducements, and not worldly designs and interests; when, to say the thing in the softest terms, no body will believe him: And that he has had no undue hand, either by himself or others, in procuring his transportation; when all the world sees it is owing altogether to his absolute acceptance of and resolute adherence to his presentation. He must after all this be gravely asked, Whether he closes with this call, and is willing to take the pastoral charge of that people? and they must be asked, Whether they receive and submit to him as their minister? and if they will permit, it must be taken for granted they do; when all present know they do not. But this is not all: This must all be done in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; solemn addresses must be made

for his blessing on his own ordinance, and his blessing on him whom he has *thus* set over that congregation; and he solemnly admonished to feed the flock of God, over which the Holy Ghost hath made him overseer. What will profane scoffers say, and what will serious Christians think of such proceedings?"\*

After the Assembly, May 1757, had ordained that the settlement of Mr. Douglas should be proceeded in at all hazards, the people knew that the arm of civil authority would cause him to be inducted. Within the Establishment they were fully aware the power of the state could not be resisted; but they knew also that the constitution of the country provided an asylum for those whose consciences were oppressed; and that they and Mr. Boston required only to come out from under the civil constitution of the Church of Scotland, and no power on earth could keep them separate. When Mr. Boston saw the path of duty, he was not a man to boggle at mere temporalities. He was too popular to be a favourite with the rulers of the church; and, like his father, as he advanced in life, his partialities had been gradually abating towards the venerable Establishment. The rulers of the church had resolved, if possible, to keep him from preferment. In the year 1751, the town of Dundee had made an attempt to secure his services; but, though he was the popular candidate, the Assembly preferred another to him in a competing call, who was abundantly unpopular. No doubt he had likewise given offence to the moderate party by his conduct in 1756, which was the year his case, conjoined with that of Bonar, was before the Assembly, and the Assembly of which year was also famous for taking up and letting slip through their fingers the infidel writings of Hume and Kaines. In the summer of that year Boston republished 'Britain's Remembrancer,' † with a long preface, in which he castigated the infidelity and wickedness of the times in a gentlemanly manner, but with merited severity. There can be little doubt as to his references, though he does not name the authors. "We have been for some time past," says he, "and still continue to be, plagued and pestered with books razing the foundations of natural as well as revealed religion." His spirited preface could not find favour with those who drank "Hume's claret," while yet he

\* Scots Mag., 1757, pp. 610, 611.

† This was a Tract which appeared after the year 1745, and which addressed itself smoothly, but powerfully, to the wickedness and practical infidelity of the age. It was originally an English publication.

was sapping the foundations of that faith they were bound to teach. Boston was disgusted with the condition of the church, and considered her liberties all but extinct. When a deputation from Jedburgh waited upon him to sound his mind concerning a separation from the Establishment, he was in a great measure prepared for the step, and did not scruple to cast in his lot with the oppressed heritage of God.

His consent having been obtained, the people now saw their way clear to erect a place of worship where they might enjoy the ministrations of him whom they had already called in the sight of God, though thwarted by the power and devices of man. The first meeting was held for this purpose, on the 30th May, 1757, and is described as “a meeting of the magistrates, town-council, several heritors, and inhabitants of the town and parish of Jedburgh, to concert upon proper measures for raising and erecting a *meeting-house* in this town.”\* Boston’s consent having been secured to become their minister, they drew out a more formal Call for subscription by the people, and appointed committees to go through Jedburgh and the various adjoining parishes, Minto, Hawick, Lilliesleaf, Maxton, Crailing, Morebattle, &c., to collect subscriptions for building the house. Ground was purchased. Some gave money. The farmers sent their servants and horses to cart the materials for the building. Wood, iron, and glass for the windows came from various quarters. Those who had no gift to give gave so many days’ labour; and, in the incredible short period of little more than six months from the first meeting, the church was built, seated, and its pulpit filled by Mr. Boston.

As the setting up of the institution was new, and the mode of conducting Dissenting churches was a matter of theory and not of experience, they had to grope their way with caution, and enter into arrangements of a delicate and difficult nature. Two things required to be arranged,—the relation between Mr. Boston and his new flock, and the dissolution of his connexion with the Church of Scotland. The latter was simple; the former was more complex, and required immediate attention. During the summer, terms of agreement passed and repassed for amendment and approval between Oxnam and Jedburgh. The business was principally managed by John Ainslie, town-clerk, who was a warm friend of Boston’s and of religious liberty. Mr. Boston

\* Minute Book of Jed. R. C.



proposed, and it was accepted of, "that he should meet the congregation of Jedburgh precisely on the principles of the Presbyterian Dissenters in England. He dissents from the Church of Scotland upon the footing of their departure from the ancient policy and discipline with respect to planting vacant parishes with gospel ministers; and he is willing still to hold communion in every thing excepting church judicatures with such ministers in the church as are sound in the faith, faithful in the discharge of their duty, and opposers of violent settlements."\* These were the terms on which he organized his church. He planted his standard as an English Presbyterian dissenter, out of all ecclesiastical connexion with the Church of Scotland, and yet willing to hold Christian communion with those of her ministers, or members, who were sound in the faith, holy in their life, and opposers of those state and church measures which were robbing the people of their right to choose their own pastors.

The English Presbyterian churches were to be the model of the new church to be set up in Jedburgh. Their general platform was the same as that of the Church of Scotland, with some slight variations, which evidently were the things that he intended to copy. The Presbyterians of England never adopted any of the books of discipline and church order bound up with the Scotch Confession. Their standards were the Confession of Faith, and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms. The Long Parliament never sanctioned any books but those of the Westminster Assembly, and the English Presbyterian church acknowledged none else. Besides, they never, at their ordinations or otherwise, signed the Confession of Faith as the confession of their faith; but licentiates were called upon to confess their faith in the doctrines of the gospel, *ex animo*, and the presbyters sat in judgment on its orthodoxy.† They used the Confession of Faith "as a help," and as a standard of examination; and so long as the ministers were not tinctured with Socinian views, the plan wrought sufficiently well; but time showed that, in a lax court, there was nothing to test the faith and conscience of a young minister.

The election of their ministers was in the people; and to this

\* Manuscript Copy.

† In the Memoirs of Michael Boston, son of Thomas Boston of Jedburgh, and who was first a minister among the English Presbyterians, there is given a confession of faith, delivered by him at his ordination, 1765. *Discourses by Mich. Boston. Edin. 1787.*

popular part of their constitution Boston unquestionably had a particular reference. It was on this point he was mainly lifting up a testimony against the Church of Scotland.

Another point on which the English Presbyterians and Boston especially harmonized, was the doctrine and practice of free communion. "Dr. Calamy, in his *Brief Account of the Protestant Dissenters*, (1717,) thus refers to the then prevailing practice on this point:—'Such friends are they to that Christian charity, upon which the writings of the New Testament lay so great a stress, that, while those of the Established church are generally for confining their communion to such as are of their own way only, a number of the Dissenters have, from the first, (though they declared they foresaw the disservice it would do to their particular interest,) owned themselves free for *occasional conformity* with Christians of all forms, who agree in the essentials of religion, in testimony of their esteeming them brethren, notwithstanding their differences in lesser matters.'" P. 34.

The English Presbyterians, like Boston, were now out of all connection with the state. The views and sentiments which generally prevailed among them in the beginning of the eighteenth century, concerning their relation to the state and the Church of England, when they were set up by him as a model, are thus cleverly stated by the Rev. Nathaniel Taylor, at Salters-hall, London, one of themselves: "The plain truth of the case is, the king and parliament are the makers and the head of the Church of England: and I think they have a just power to rule their own creature; and our Convocation, in the true notion of it, are but their ecclesiastical council. Now, king, lords, and commons have granted us a toleration; and the collection of all the churches, whether conformists or nonconformists, are the Church of England, united under one civil government. Our conformable brethren, indeed, are the church *triumphant*: they have the temples, and the tythes, and other large revenues, by the law of the land. We live by the voluntary contributions of our people, which we have a right to, in the general, only by the law of God. They are the elder sister, who has a large fortune; we like the younger ones, who were not so kindly dealt with. But we neither envy nor murmur; we only plead, that merely because we are poor, we should not be called bastards, and, as such, kicked out of the family. Authority has made them a church; but the same authority has given us a per-

mission to form ourselves into churches ; so that we stand on the same ground, though not on the [same] level with them ; and the cry of the church's jurisdiction and authority over us, and of rebellion against her, is quite turned out of doors." \*

As to Boston's own pecuniary arrangements with them for the support of himself and family, it was stipulated that he should receive a bond for £120 per annum. He had been instructed, that "the onerous clause of the bond must not be his preaching the gospel, but the love and favour which the granters bear to him and his family, otherwise it is not valid in law." † A number of the most respectable people therefore in Jedburgh at once came forward and signed the bond. For this part of the transaction Mr. Boston suffered much abuse at the time. The Magazines of the day opened upon him. Pamphleteers fixed upon this as a peg on which to hang their abuse. Till this day he is held up by some as a mere popular demagogue, seeking worldly pelf ; and, under the mask of religion, leaving Oxnam with a stipend of £90, for the new church at Jedburgh with a stipend, secured on bond during his natural life, for £120 yearly. Candour might have asked if Boston, with his learning, character, and first-rate talents as a preacher, would not have made his way to one of the best livings of the Church of Scotland. He required only to exercise a little patience, and use the requisite means of doing homage to patrons and people, and his elevation was morally certain. He had in his power the means of turning the abuse then heaped upon him to his honour ; and yet he never employed it. At the time he got the bond he also granted a back-bond to the same parties in the following terms :—"Whereas, by the conception of the said bond, the sum therein contained is made payable during all the days of my life ; yet I hereby declare, that, notwithstanding thereof, they shall be no farther bound in payment thereof to me than during my residence and usefulness to them." So that the cry which was incessantly kept up against him for driving a hard monied bargain with the people of Jedburgh, was a base and unworthy slander. The cumbrous nature of the arrangement about his stipend sprang from the novelty of the circumstances in which he was placed, and the erroneous information which he had received about the legality of a dissenting minister's stipend.

The demission of his charge was a much easier matter, as

\* Inquiry into the Principles of the Eng. Presb., p. 144.

† Manuscript.

here he was walking on old ecclesiastical ground, and had regular forms to guide his procedure. On the 7th of December, 1757, the Established presbytery met at Jedburgh. The attendance of people in the old church was immense. From the pressure of the crowd most of its pews were broken down. On that day Boston, to the grief of the presbytery, but to the joy of the people, gave in his demission. It was couched in the following terms :—" The demission of me, Mr. Thomas Boston, minister at Oxnam, humbly sheweth, Albeit there are several things in the national church, which have been all along disagreeable to me; yet the present method of settling vacant churches by the mere force of presentations, which has been so long persisted in, and is almost every year prosecute more vigorously, is so diametrically opposite to all the laws of Jesus Christ about that matter, has such a manifest tendency to fill the church with naughty members, to mar the edification of the body of Christ, and, in fine, utterly to destroy the dying remains of religion in the nation, that I can no longer sit a member of the present judicatures of this church, but must leave my place there, that I may take part with the oppressed heritage of God. When I entered on my ministry in the national church, more than twenty years ago, even then with concern I beheld violent settlements authorized by the General Assemblies thereof. But in those days there was a very considerable number of members who opposed such violences, and they were by their number and influence a pretty good balance against those who favoured them. Hence, when the General Assembly, or their commission, had authorized a violent settlement, the next Assembly was readily composed of such members as were inclined to check and control these tyrannical measures. But, alas! the times are visibly altered to the worse! The bulk of those worthy men who opposed the encroachments complained of, are, it is likely, removed to their rest and reward. The evidence hereof is, that, for a course of years past, we find one Assembly after another changing their members, but never changing their tyrannical measures in settling vacant churches. Those who adhere to the ancient principles and practice of the Church of Scotland in this matter, are now reduced to such a small and inconsiderable handful, that they are quite run down by the numerous opponents, and have it not in their power to reform those crying abuses, nor to do justice to the oppressed, while they continue in the communion of the church. Upon these,



and other considerations, which afterwards may be made manifest, I judge it my duty to give up the place which I hold as a minister of the national church, and at the same time to continue in the full exercise of that ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, as God in his providence shall give me opportunity. Therefore wit ye me, the said Mr. Thomas Boston, to have demitted and laid down, likeas I hereby *simpliciter* demit and lay down my pastoral charge of the parish of Oxnam, and deliver over the said parish into the hands of the Reverend presbytery of Jedburgh, within whose bounds it lies; craving that the said Reverend presbytery may, upon this my demission being lodged in their clerk's hands, and read in their presence, find the said parish vacant, and cause the same be declared in due form, and proceed to the settlement of a gospel-minister therein, with all convenient speed. Upon all which I take instruments, and crave extracts. T. BOSTON.\*

Every member of presbytery objected to receiving his demission save the elder of Jedburgh, who was anxious, of course, that he should be set free, and become their pastor. Boston was inflexible. His mind was made up to the step. He was not doing it abruptly, but after mature deliberation; and on what appeared to him solid grounds. He read a long paper which he had carefully prepared in defence of his conduct. It was, in a great measure, an echo of his "demission," only more particular, and touching upon points which were rather of a personal than public nature. He declared his dissent from all the judicatures of the church; and that he would, henceforward, be a member of none of her courts; but, as he believed there were good Christians within her pale, he would be willing to hold communion, both lay and ministerial, with all such as were sound in the faith and holy in their practices. While he would not divide the congregations of faithful ministers, yet he could not co-operate ecclesiastically with those who were intruding ministers upon reclaiming congregations contrary to the scriptures; and that was the almost universal character of the present pastors of the church. To perpetuate a faithful gospel-ministry, and relieve the oppressed heritage of God, he considered it as indispensable that some ministers should throw in their lot with them. He might stand till the day of his death, in the presbytery, testifying against oppression; but would that

\* Scots Mag., 1758, p. 266.

bring any relief to the oppressed congregation of Jedburgh? When souls were perishing ministers must not live at their ease, but leave their warm house in the midst of the storm, throw the rope, and put forth all their activity to save others in the moment of peril. To relieve the oppressed, he voluntarily gave up a certain living in the Establishment for what was deemed a precarious subsistence out of it. He left the loaves and the fishes, and followed the dictates of conscience for the purpose of doing good.

The presbytery still refused to accept of his demission, dissuaded him from his purpose, and required him to attend to the duties of his office as formerly at Oxnam. He had not, however, so learned Christ. He might have said with Paul, ‘What mean ye to weep and to break my heart? for I am ready not only to be bound but to die at Jerusalem for the sake of the Lord Jesus.’ His demission was left upon the table, couched in these expressive terms: “Albeit there were several things in the national church which have all along been disagreeable to me.” And having wrenched the yoke from off his neck, he was not to be coaxed to have it again slipped over his ears. The people could scarcely brook the importunities of the presbytery, and long after gave them perhaps less credit for their sympathy, and more credit for a covert design to mar their plans, than what in a spirit of charity they were in all probability fairly entitled to.

On Friday, 9th Dec., 1757, Mr. Boston was inducted into the new church, built for him at Jedburgh. The bells were rung. The magistrates and council, in the insignia of their office, walked in procession to the meeting-house. They were all members of the congregation, and had been mainly instrumental in carrying forward the undertaking. At least two thousand people were present. “His admission,” says an eye-witness, “was performed with as much order as the circumstances of the case would permit, by Mr. Roderick Mackenzie, a dissenting minister lately from England, but who is shortly to accept a charge in the same way at Nigg in Ross-shire: a presbytery was constituted *ad hunc effectum*; and the questions usually put to ministers at their admission were put to Mr. Boston on this occasion, with a small variation in one or two of them, arising from the peculiarity of his case, which was so supplied as to bind him to hold communion with, and be subject to his brethren in the Lord, if an opportunity shall be afforded him; and he was moreover taken bound against Episcopacy and the supremacy on the

one hand, and sectarianism on the other; and to maintain the succession to the crown of these realms in the illustrious House of Hanover. Mr. Boston having answered all these questions agreeable to the *ecclesiastic* constitutions of the Church of Scotland; the town-council, the session, and whole body of the people, were desired to declare their adherence to the same principles, and to Mr. Boston as their minister; which all of them did, by the stretching out of their right hands; and then they joined in humble and fervent prayer for God's blessing on him who was thus set over them as their minister. In fine, the day was religiously observed, in fasting, prayer, and sermons adapted to the occasion, and the whole performed with as much solemnity and decency as hath been known in these parts on like occasions."\*

On Sabbath, Mr. Mackenzie again preached, taking as his text, Isa. xxvi. 4, "Trust ye in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." Mr. Boston preached in the afternoon, on these words, Eph. vi. 18, 19, "Praying always—that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel;" and, in the application, said, among other things, that as he had never entertained his hearers with reflections on any set of men, those who expected such things would be disappointed. The audience was so numerous, that many of them sat without, opposite to the windows, which were opened; and about fifty, who could not hear, went to the old church, where Mr. Rogers, minister of Hunam, was preaching by appointment of the presbytery; whose whole auditory, it is said, did not exceed eighty."†

Every thing connected with the settlement was according to the ordering of Mr. Boston himself; and, at the distance of upwards of eighty years, when dissent has become a thing of experience and of repeated *ecclesiastic* legislation, the forms observed are in many respects models to be imitated. He did not innovate upon the *ecclesiastic* forms of the country for the sake of innovation; and yet he was careful to plant himself down as the nucleus of a new denomination, distinct from the Establishment, if ever in providence any brethren should associate themselves with him. "He answered all the questions agreeable to the *ecclesiastic* constitutions of the Church of Scotland," carefully avoiding the civil acts of parliament by which she was estab-

\* Scots Mag., 1757, p. 667.

† Ibid., pp. 667, 668.

lished, and her ministers inducted, against which he particularly dissented. Mr. Mackenzie was on his way to erect an Independent church; and yet, even though there might have been a temptation to associate with him, he preferred the Presbyterian order. He made distinct provision for carrying it out with co-presbyters, if an opportunity offered; while yet he took care to have the usual formula altered even in little matters, that it might harmonize with his present profession and circumstances. He particularly stipulated for the principles of free communion, and bound himself equally, in the presence of his people, against "supremacy" and "sectarianism." He thus reared a platform in Scotland which was entirely new, and which has been gradually ever since influencing more or less the public mind. The same opinions were indeed held by others, but it was rather by sufferance than avowedly, in their different religious denominations; whereas he avowed them as the landmarks of his party, should presbyters ever gather around his standard.

After his induction, Boston preached to crowded audiences, and persons from a great distance formed a considerable portion of his congregation. The surrounding parishes poured in their population every Sabbath into Jedburgh, and his church became the focus of light and warmth to the whole of the populous neighbourhood. The Established presbytery now accepted of his demission, for the rubicon, on his part, was now crossed. Oxnam was declared vacant. The synod of Merse and Teviotdale remitted the whole matter to the supreme court, that the weight of its authority might be interposed in inflicting a severe censure. Boston was summoned to attend, as if he had been under law to the church. He knew better what was due to the deliberate step which he had taken, than to appear as a panel at the bar of a church all whose judicatories he had voluntarily renounced. The Assembly having taken up his case, came unanimously to the following resolution: "The General Assembly, in respect of the particular circumstances attending this cause, did agree to take Mr. Boston's demission under their consideration, together with the proceedings of the presbytery of Jedburgh relating to him, whereby they find, that he has declared himself to be no minister of this church, and that he will not hold communion with her judicatories; and did therefore, without a vote, declare, that he is incapable of receiving or accepting a presentation or call to any parish in this church, without the special allowance



of some future General Assembly; and the General Assembly does hereby prohibit all the ministers of this church, from employing him to preach or perform any ministerial offices for them, or from being employed by him, unless some future Assembly shall see cause to take off this prohibition.”\* This sentence contrasts very unfavourably with the tone and language of the “demonstration” of Mr. Boston. He voluntarily withdrew from the judicatories of the church for reasons assigned, and yet professed affection to those whom he deemed Christians within her pale, and proffered to hold occasional communion with them either as a minister or private Christian; but the Assembly displayed no corresponding temper. They not only excluded him from their courts, which was the corresponding part of his paper, but they set the mark of reprobation upon him as a person whom no one of their number was either to aid or employ. He was in fact dealt with as a factious brother instead of being treated as a conscientious dissenter.

The authority of the Assembly, cutting him off from all communion with the church, could not touch him as a minister of the gospel called of God to minister to his oppressed people. He intermeddled not with the affairs of the Establishment, and did not even print his defence before the presbytery, though it was prepared for that purpose, and eagerly expected. Boston having removed himself out of the way, Douglas—with his five callers—was *quietly* ordained at Jedburgh on the 28th July: all the ministers of the presbytery being present. It cannot be said that he sunk into obscurity, for he never rose into notice.

The first time Boston dispensed the sacrament, the concourse of people was immense. The name of Boston was a household word among all the pious people of Scotland. His eloquence was of the very highest order. Bogue of Gosport, who, when a student, often heard him, and who was qualified to judge, said, when on his last visit to Scotland as a deputation from the London Missionary Society, that Thomas Boston, next to Whitefield, was the most commanding preacher he had ever heard. Besides, he now wore the laurels of being a voluntary victim for the rights and liberties of the people. The town on Saturday was crowded with strangers from Edinburgh, from beyond the Forth, from the fertile vale of the Merse, and from the upland districts

\* Scots Mag., 1758, p. 267.

to the west, where father and son had so long laboured with so much acceptance. According to the practice of that part of the country at that period, the ordinance was to be dispensed in the open air. The spot fixed on was a little holm, called the ANA, on the banks of the Jed, and close by the town. It was as if art and nature had made it for the purpose to which it was that day to be devoted. It is shaped like a parallelogram. At the one end is the access to it from the public road. Along the one side flows the rippling Jed; along the other a long line of orchards and trees shutting out the view of the town; at the other end or bottom, though it is nearly level, there rises a high precipitous *brae* with red scaurs from the shooting down of the earth, and here and there a few trees struggling to hold their position in its almost perpendicular face. The Jed strikes the face of the *brae*, and is turned away nearly at a right angle, and escapes by a concealed outlet covered by trees with their leafy shade. At the base of this natural wall or *brae* a temporary pulpit was erected. The communion-tables stretched out from it in two long rows covered with linen white as snow. The day was all that man could wish. The sun shed down his sweet lustre from a forenoon sky without a cloud. The little vale was filled like the area of an immense cathedral. The face of the almost perpendicular rising ground behind the pulpit was studded over with parties who could find the root of a tree or a projection on which to fix themselves. There was no bustle, but a calm solemnity becoming the sacred day, and the simple solemn service in which they were to be employed. Every head was uncovered when Mr. Boston, attended by his elders and the magistrates of the place, walked on to his allotted station, from whence he, unaided, was to dispense among all these thousands the bread of life. The wide dome of heaven spread over his head, made him feel that he was worshipping in a nobler temple than was ever constructed by the hands of man. The smile of a gracious Master sustained him. The sacrament on the Ana is a day which children, then unborn, have learned to talk of with rapture, and the stranger is still taken to the spot where Boston and his people first pledged their love to each other over the memorials of a bleeding Saviour. The impressions carried away by the immense multitude, on behalf of the claims of piety and the rights of conscience, were invaluable in an age when the mind was fettered by state-enactments in behalf of religion.

What Boston could do so nobly, others might at least attempt with some prospect of success.\*

When the dispensation of the Lord's Supper came round again, Mr. Boston invited Mr. Gillespie to assist him. It seems a little strange that Gillespie's aid was not procured sooner, as their circumstances were so much akin to each other; and Gillespie owed his first religious impressions to Boston's father. It is idle to speculate on a point where there is no light. Gillespie acceded to his request. It was not so easy travelling then as now

\* In the autobiography of a Scotch Borderer, which appeared some years ago in *Frazer's Magazine*, and which was afterwards (1834) reprinted at Jedburgh, the rise of the Relief cause at Jedburgh forms the kernel of the story. It is understood to be written by a Doctor and his lady, who are both well known in the literary world for their tasteful writing. They are both natives of Jedburgh. The rise of the Relief is of course satirized. Facts are dressed in a fool's coat to be laughed at; yet the old inhabitants say it contains some portions of true description. The author, or rather authoress, is compelled to speak in the highest terms of the Sacrament on the Ana. "The sun shone out with unclouded splendour, exhibiting in strong relief the numerous assemblage awaiting, in breathless expectation, the appearance of the popular idol. He ascended the pulpit; not a sound was heard, save the gentle rippling of the water and the low rustling of the tall trees which skirted one side of the ground as they were moved by the morning breeze. Soon, however, was the stillness interrupted by the voices of this vast multitude, raised in one simultaneous song of praise to Him whose temple is earth, sea, and sky. I was then in the first fresh spring-tide of existence. I am now descending into the vale of years; yet never, during my long pilgrimage through life, have I witnessed beneath the consecrated dome, decorated by sacerdotal pride, nor in the more simple temples of my native land, a scene more august, or devotion more impressive. The action-sermon was listened to with deep attention; and after the objugation, or fencing the tables, was concluded, the faithful pastor descended from the pulpit, and placed himself by the side of the elements, surrounded by his elders. In a voice tremulous from exertion, he read a portion of the psalm usually sung as the communion-tables are filling:

' Who is the man that shall ascend  
Into the hill of God?  
Or who within his holy place  
Shall have a firm abode?  
Whose hands are clean, whose heart is pure,  
And unto vanity  
Who hath not lifted up his soul,  
Nor sworn deceitfully.' "

To these interesting reminiscences may be added this other fact, related by an aged hearer of Boston's. "When going on with his discourse, he would stop and say to the immense multitude,—'If any one does not hear well, let him hold up his hand, and I will speak louder,' when it was almost impossible to conceive he could do so. His voice was loud yet pleasant; and being tall, he had, from his elevation above the people, a very commanding appearance."

between Dunfermline and Jedburgh. On Saturday he did not arrive; on Sabbath morning he was not come. Boston went to the church, where the sacrament was to be dispensed by him, alone. A whole day's services were before him, and taking strangers along with his own congregation, (aged persons report that) 1,800 would at times communicate with him. During the morning-prayer, Mr. Boston heard the pulpit door open, and a foot come gently in behind him. It was then the custom for the assistant minister to go to the pulpit during the action sermon. He could scarcely be deceived as to his visitant. His prayer was speedily drawn to a close. Turning round—*it was Mr. Gillespie*. In the face of the whole congregation, whose feelings were wound up to the highest pitch of excitement, he gave him a most cordial welcome. A rush of tender feelings came over the heart of Gillespie as he received the hand of his friend. To his father, under God, he owed his spiritual birth. For six years he had stood alone without one he could call his brother. The same rigorous authority which had cast him out had given him a Boston as his first clerical friend in his anomalous condition. He was completely overcome. The droppings of inward sorrows, which had been gathering for years in the recesses of his heart, now burst forth in tears of joy. All the time Mr. Boston preached the opening sermon, he sat behind him weeping like a child. A friendship begun and nursed in these circumstances must have had a strength and warmth to which common friendships are entire strangers. From this time forward they followed joint measures for promoting the liberty of the Christian people, and affording relief to oppressed parishes, though they did not constitute themselves into a regular presbytery till three years afterwards.



## CHAPTER X.

### THE ERECTION OF COLINGSBURGH CHURCH AND FORMATION OF THE RELIEF PRESBYTERY.

COLINGSBURGH was the third congregation which joined the standard of religious liberty, and had the honour of being a component part of the Presbytery of Relief at its formation. It originated from an obnoxious settlement in Kilconquhar, Fife, in which parish Colingsburgh is a populous village. The Earl of Balcarras, as patron, presented to the pastorate, Dr. John Chalmers, minister of Elie, who was very much disliked by the elders, and the great majority of the parishioners. The people, with great spirit, opposed his translation; and in this they were supported both by the presbytery of St. Andrews and synod of Fife. These courts refused to carry into effect the translation in the face of a reclaiming congregation. An appeal was taken from their judgment to the commission of the Assembly in November 1759, and ultimately to the Assembly itself in 1760, which sustained the call, and enjoined the presbytery forthwith to carry the translation into effect. The remonstrances of the people were entirely disregarded. On this occasion Dr. Wotherspoon delivered one of his cutting speeches; but with all its teeth, he was merely biting a file: "For a probationer," said he, "to adhere to a presentation, notwithstanding the opposition of the people, there may be some excuse; but for a settled minister not only to act this part, but to excel all that ever were before him, in a bold and insolent contempt of the people, as plainly appears to be Dr. Chalmers's case, is such conduct, that I shall have a worse opinion of this Assembly than I have at present, if they do not openly express their indignation at such indecency of behaviour. In the history of the church we find no character more odious, or more unclerical, if I may speak so, than ambition and open solicitation of ecclesiastical preferment.

Moderator, it is not only the people of the parish, or those of lower rank, but many of all stations whom we shall offend, in the proper sense of the word, if we order this settlement. They are led by such things to treat, and they often do treat with derision, a minister's concern for his usefulness, and affirm that it is no more than a desire of a comfortable benefice and salary for life. I shall be sorry to see the day when, by resembling them in their practice, we shall learn from England to leave the people and the work altogether out of the act, and so call our charges no more *parishes* but *livings*.”\*

The settlement was ordered to take place before the first of August. Such were the determination and vigorous efforts of the people that, by the fifteenth of the same month, they had purchased ground, collected some subscriptions, and taken measures to build for themselves a large meeting-house in the village of Colingsburgh, which was the most central situation for the accommodatiou of the parish, and other surrounding districts who, like themselves, had ministers inflicted upon them contrary to their wishes. It does not appear that they had at first any fixed purpose concerning the nature of the church they were about to erect, save that they were to have a meeting-house, and to elect their own pastor. In this they were united; and also in their opposition to Dr. Chalmers. They expected countenance from some of the neighbouring parish ministers who had been their friends in the church-courts; and were also encouraged to proceed in their undertaking by the example and advice of Messrs. Gillespie and Boston.

This step being taken, they instantly felt themselves in an entirely new position. All the neighbouring ministers in the Establishment refused to baptize their children unless they produced a recommendatory letter from Dr. Chalmers, their parish minister. Even Mr. Smith, of Newburn, who had been their warmest friend, refused. They had neither freedom of conscience to ask letters of recommendation from a person who was intruded among them, nor would they likely have obtained them. In these circumstances they applied repeatedly to Mr. Gillespie to come and preach, and baptize their children. He was not very prompt, however, in acceding to their request. He “would not be prevailed upon till every minister in the presbytery did refuse, al-

\* Wotherspoon's Works, vol. viii., pp. 290, 291.

though we wrote and sent some of our number to him several times; and when we were altogether destitute, then he thought he had the Lord's call to come and preach, and baptize our children."\* Circumstances thus necessitated them to seek a connection with Mr. Gillespie; while he, on the other hand, would not dispense religious ordinances to them till the ministers, whom they still recognised in their neighbourhood, did distinctly "refuse" them and their children sealing ordinances. By putting the neighbouring ministers to this test he avoided, as he thought, the sin of schism. They thus became Dissenters by compulsion, and Relief Dissenters by choice, for the Secession pressed upon them sermon, which they respectfully declined.

When Mr. Gillespie first came and preached among them, a circumstance occurred which not unfrequently occurred afterwards in Relief congregations, and which shows how little religious liberty was at the time understood. Mr. Gillespie preached in a tent; and a great number of people having flocked to hear him, the elders, at the solicitation of the congregation, collected on the occasion upwards of £6 for building their church. Such, however, was the dread of the parish session filching it from them by law, and such the rumour of a threatened process, that they were constrained to take legal advice on the point. It was found in their case, as in all others afterwards, that the parish session could not touch a farthing of a collection made for the support of a dissenting church. To take away even the colour of its being made by elders in the parish, the managers were henceforth appointed to stand and receive the collection from the people. The anomalous procedure of managers rather than elders standing at the *plate* on Sabbath in some Relief churches, was thus early introduced, and sprang, as might have been conjectured, from no disrespect to the elders, but from prudential considerations.

The church was speedily reared. Several neighbouring parishes, such as Largo, Newburn, and St. Andrews, sent in their contributions. In the spring of 1761, they framed for themselves a constitution, by entering into what they called "a joint copartnery and society for religious purposes," among the subscribers and contributors. The very first article of their copartnery was, "That the said society and copartnery shall continue

\* Col. Minute Book, p. 8.

from hence until the same shall be dissolved by the joint concurrence of at least two-third parts of the partners; and it is hereby declared that the society shall not be dissolved in any other way." They connected themselves with no religious body whatever, but set up a solitary church, resolved in some way or other to maintain their religious independence and privileges.

As Gillespie was in their neighbourhood, and had set them an example of supporting religious ordinances for nine years alone, in the face and against the authority of the whole Church of Scotland, they were emboldened by his pattern, and looked to him for direction and aid. By his advice, they first called "the Rev. Thomas Scott, a dissenting minister at Hexham, England." On mature deliberation, however, he declined their invitation, as the congregation was numerous, and his constitution was not very robust. This damped them considerably. But they were not to be dispirited by a single unsuccessful overture. Fresh commissioners were despatched to Dunfermline and Jedburgh to consult with their tried friends in affliction—Gillespie and Boston. In a short time they were instructed by them to open up a communication with "the Rev. Thomas Colier, minister of the gospel at Ravenstonedale, Westmoreland, England, as a person of good report who would likely accept of a harmonious call from their congregation." Mr. Colier was a native of Fife, and had gone to England, where he had received a call from a nonconformist congregation, and was labouring amongst them.

The congregation were very desirous of hearing and judging personally of Mr. Colier's attainments and gifts. They had only heard Mr. Scott by commissioners. At their earnest solicitation, Mr. Colier was prevailed upon first to preach in Mr. Gillespie's church, and afterwards to supply the pulpit of Colingsburgh for two successive Sabbaths. The people were fully satisfied. With great cordiality they invited him to become their pastor. Though the call was not given according to Presbyterian order, it was conducted with great solemnity; and what it lacked in point of usual form, it possessed in affectionate and touching simplicity. "At the people's desire a call was drawn up to the said Mr. Thomas Colier, and harmoniously subscribed by the elders, and many hundreds of people in a public manner before witnesses. The people put the same into the hands of the elders and principal managers to give unto Mr. Colier, who inquired of us the motives whereby we were excited, and also the principles we



acted from. He did accept of our call, and declared to us, in the Lord's strength, to essay by his grace to the utmost of his ability to fulfil the work of that ministry he had received from the Lord, for the edification of this great and numerous congregation."\* His stipend was fixed at £60, with a manse. Neither Mr. Gillespie nor Boston were present at the formation of this ministerial compact. It was transacted by the congregation in the presence of the great Head of the church; and when they put their call into Mr. Colier's hands, and he accepted of it, their eyes literally "beheld their teacher." As Mr. Colier was from among the dissenters in England, this mode of forming a ministerial engagement with a Christian society would be perfectly familiar to him, and was in all probability suggested by himself. It was akin to that of an English Presbyterian or Congregational church agreement between pastor and people, prior to ordination.

Mr. Colier having come from England, and taken up his abode at Colingsburgh among his people, preparations were made in a few weeks for his formal induction. In this service both Gillespie and Boston agreed to take a part, and after the service to form themselves into a presbytery. These were very important proceedings, and a record of them, in the Minute Book of the Colingsburgh congregation, has been happily preserved. On the day preceding the induction, Mr. Colier and his people observed a solemn fast; accommodating themselves also, in this matter, rather to the English Congregational than to the Scotch Presbyterian model. A session was constituted on the morning of the day of induction, and an elder was chosen to be a member of the intended presbytery. Elders from each of the other two congregations were also to be present. The three churches, by their office-bearers, thus met upon an equality, and took an equal share in the business of the day. As the minute of the proceedings of that day has hitherto, when printed, appeared in a garbled state, it is necessary to give it entire, that the three Fathers may be heard to speak for themselves. They are the best expounders of their own meaning:—

"COLINGSBURGH, 1761. October, 22d day, being formerly fixed for Mr. Colier's admission to be minister of this congrega-

\* Col. M. B., p. 28.

tion—a day immediately after a solemn fast. The elders met in the morning; found it necessary that one of their number should be chosen by them to be a member of the intended presbytery; so for that purpose they called Mr. Colier, and, after constituting a session, made choice of Alexander Scott to be a member of this intended presbytery. The members present, besides the minister, are as follows: viz. William Ramsay, Thomas Russel, Andrew Wilson, George Taylor, and Alexander Scott, elders.

“ This 22d October, 1761, the Rev. Mr. Thomas Boston, minister of the gospel at Jedburgh, preached the admission sermon from 1 Cor. ii. 2. ‘ For I determined not to know any thing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified:’ and afterwards proceeded to all the other parts of the solemnity according to scripture; and then the elders, principal managers, and whole body of the people, received him as their minister.

“ In the evening of this day the persecuted ministers met with Mr. Colier, and an elder from each of their congregations met in the session-house here, and formed themselves into a presbytery, called the Presbytery of Relief, for the reasons following.

“ Whereas Thomas Gillespie, minister of the gospel at Carnock, was deposed by the General Assembly, 1752, ‘ in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the sole King and Head of the church, and by virtue of the power and authority committed by him to them, from the office of the holy ministry, and prohibited and discharged to exercise the same or any part thereof within this Church—the Established Church of Scotland—in all time coming. And they thereby did and do declare the church and parish of Carnock vacant from and after the date of that sentence,’ merely because he would not settle Mr. Andrew Richardson, then minister at Broughton, as minister of the gospel at Inverkeithing, contrary to the will of the congregation. Thus, in contradiction to scripture, in opposition to the standing laws of the Church of Scotland, what had therefore been a manifest violation of the solemn oath and engagements he came under when admitted minister of Carnock—therefore a presumptuous sin. Thus (a) highly aggravated transgression of the law of the great God and our Saviour.

“ Mr. Thomas Boston, then minister of the gospel at Oxnam, received a scriptural call from the parish and congregation of Jedburgh, to minister among them in holy things, the which call he regularly accepted according to Christ’s appointment:

And as the presbytery of Jedburgh refused to loose his relation 'twixt him and the parish and congregation of Oxnam, and establish a relation 'twixt him and the parish and congregation of Jedburgh, though required. He thought they refused to do their duty. He was bound to do his by the Divine authority. Therefore peaceably and orderly gave in to that presbytery a demission of his charge of Oxnam, and took charge of the congregation of Jedburgh.

“ Mr. Thomas Colier, late minister of the gospel at Ravenston-dale, in England, has accepted a call from the oppressed congregation of Kilconquhar, and others joined with them, to fulfil among them that ministry he has received of the Lord.

“ These three ministers think themselves indispensably bound by the authority of the Lord Redeemer, King and Head of his church, to fulfil every part of the ministry they have received from him, and for that end, in concurrence with ruling elders, to constitute a presbytery as scripture directs; for committing that ministry Christ has intrusted them with to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others; and to act for (the) relief of oppressed Christian congregations—when called in providence. And therein they act precisely the same part they did when ministers, members of the Established Church of Scotland.

“ In consequence whereof, Mr. Thomas Colier, late minister in Ravenston-dale, having got a unanimous call from the congregation at Colingsburgh to be their minister, was this day admitted to the office, after sermon preached from 1 Cor. ii. 2. by Mr. Thomas Boston, minister at Jedburgh. And the same day, at four of the clock in the afternoon, Messrs. Boston, Gillespie, and Colier, with an elder from their respective congregations; viz. from the congregation of Jedburgh, George Rutherford; from the congregation of Dunfermline, Provost David Turnbull; from the congregation of Colingsburgh, Alexander Scott; convened in the meeting-house of Colingsburgh, and by solemn prayer by Mr. Thomas Gillespie, formed themselves into a presbytery for the relief of Christians oppressed in their Christian privileges.

“ The presbytery, thus constituted, chose Mr. Thomas Boston for their moderator, and the above Alexander Scott for their clerk *pro tempore*. The presbytery adjourned to the house of Alexander Scott.

“ The presbytery appoints the seventeenth day of December

next to be observed in the congregations under their inspection as a day of solemn thanksgiving unto God for his goodness in the late harvest, and agreed their next meeting should be when providence calls.

“The sederunt closed with prayer.”

This minute is a very important document in the History of the Relief Body, and is the only authentic record of its constitution as a presbytery. The portion of it which is properly the minute of presbytery, and which begins with giving the reasons of their forming themselves into an ecclesiastical court, is evidently given at the dictation of Mr. Gillespie. It is cast in his strong, rugged, and somewhat involved style. The point studiously brought out in the narration is the fact, that they were all suffering persecution and oppression in their religious rights and privileges, and therefore necessitated, from a respect to the authority of Christ, the King and Head of his church, to take the step of forming themselves into a separate presbytery. Very particular prominence is given to the sentence of deposition passed upon Mr. Gillespie. It is placed in two lights. First, it is represented as a gross outrage, performed in the name of Christ as the Head of his church; and, secondly, it is pointed out as being a sentence of deposition, limited merely to the Church of Scotland; so that Gillespie was still warranted to exercise, *out of the Church of Scotland*, the office of the ministry. It is very remarkable, that both in the ordination of Mr. Colier, and in the constitution of themselves as a presbytery, the minute bears, “that the solemnity was performed according to scripture;” and farther, they “constitute a presbytery as scripture directs.” There is not a single phrase recognising the laws and canons of the Church of Scotland. The Confession of Faith is not even mentioned. The following are the principles embodied evidently in the minute, as characterizing this new denomination:—1. It was to be called the Presbytery of Relief. 2. It was to be a Presbyterian denomination, composed of ministers and ruling elders, with churches under their inspection. 3. It recognised the “Lord Redeemer King and Head of his church.” 4. Its rule was the scriptures. 5. It claimed the power, as a scripturally constituted presbytery, to license and ordain others for the work of the ministry. 6. It particularly proffered assistance and relief to all oppressed Christian congregations. 7. Under Christ, as the Head of his church,



it appointed its own seasons and forms of worship, and therefore, at its very first meeting, appointed a day of thanksgiving "in all the congregations under their inspection."

There are several mistakes about the early principles of the Relief church which this minute corrects and sets in a proper light. Ill-informed friends, and prejudiced enemies, have equally contributed to falsify and pervert the constitution of the presbytery. These three excellent men are often represented as having set up a judicatory in some manner connected with the Establishment; and their churches are described as a sort of chapels-of-ease, neither in nor out of the Establishment. The thing is impossible in practice. In the case of the Fathers of the Relief it was never dreamed of; for, in the very same narrative in which they declare themselves a scripturally constituted presbytery, they explicitly avow that they were so completely out of connection with the church, that one of them was under sentence of deposition, and another of them had given in his demission to the Established church, and the third was a minister from England, and hence not in connection with any of the church-courts of Scotland. In their minute, they trace not their connection with, but their disjunction from, the Establishment. They set themselves up as clothed with ministerial authority in spite of its oppressive sentence of deposition, and constitute themselves a presbytery to license and ordain ministers, and to act for the relief of oppressed congregations; "and therein," say they with emphasis, "they act the same part they did when ministers, members of the Established Church of Scotland."

Another gross mistake has obtained currency about the rule of church procedure which the Relief presbytery adopted. For this the denomination is indebted to one of her own sons, who afterwards proved himself unworthy of her communion. The Rev. James Smith, minister of the Relief church, Dunfermline, who at a subsequent period joined himself to the Establishment, published in 1783, "Historical Sketches of the Relief Church," in which he gives an account of the "Constitution of the Relief Presbytery." "After the presbytery," says he, "was constituted by Messrs. Gillespie and Boston, with two elders who had been ordained in the Church of Scotland, the principles and constitution of the Relief church were judicially declared; to which Mr. Colier, when admitted to be a co-presbyter, solemnly adhered. The presbytery required of him a solemn and public profession of his

faith in God, his belief of the scriptures, his approbation of presbytery according to Reformation principles, and his adherence to the constitution of the Church of Scotland as exhibited in her creeds, her canons, confessions, and forms of worship.”\* This statement has often been quoted by other authors, in giving an account of the constitution of the Relief church, as a correct record of facts. The slightest comparative glance, however, at it and the original minute, shows that it is both defective, and coloured to suit a purpose. It is all but certain Mr. Smith could never have seen the original minute. It bears that, instead of Gillespie and Boston constituting the first presbyterial meeting, Colier was also of the number; instead of two elders there were three; and instead of this presbytery being formed for the reception of Colier, he had been received as minister of Colingsburgh before it met. They met on the afternoon of Mr. Colier’s admission, not to receive “his profession of faith,” but to constitute themselves the Presbytery of Relief. The Relief church never received the canons of the Established church. There is no vestige of her ever having adopted the Formula of the Church of Scotland. The oldest living ministers never heard of such a thing. The aim of Mr. Smith’s pamphlet was to rebut the attack which the Burghers, in their Judicial Testimony of 1779, had made against the Presbytery of Relief, “as leading professing Christians away from a steadfast attachment to the Reformation principles of the Church of Scotland,”† and he seems to have been more resolved to give a firm rejoinder to them, than to produce good proof. He was writing at the distance of twenty-two years from the time the presbytery first met, and the probability is he had never seen the records of Colingsburgh. It was before that time a congregation out of connection with the Relief synod, and its minute-book contained the transactions of that important day. The Confession of Faith, as will be afterwards seen, was the standard subordinate to the Scriptures, adopted by the Relief presbytery; but it is not referred to in the admission of Boston to Jedburgh, nor

\* Mr. Smith’s pamphlet bears upon its title-page MDCCLXXIII. This is a misprint for MDCCLXXXIII. An X is wanting. Mr. S. was not ordained in Dunfermline till 1777. He quotes Hutcheson’s pamphlets, which were not published till 1779. Besides, his pamphlet is chiefly of a controversial nature, and directed against the Burgher Edition of the Judicial Act and Testimony, which did not appear till 1779. In some copies the error is corrected by the pen.

† Judicial Testimony, p. 177.

of Colier to Colingsburgh. Both Gillespie and Colier having been ordained in England where the Confession is not signed, and Boston having set up his church according to the platform of the English Presbyterians, the likelihood is exceedingly great that the Confession is not referred to, because it was not employed in the services. This will explain a reference made in a bitter and formal attack against the Relief in the Scots Magazine a few years afterwards. "What principles," asks the writer, "do the presbytery of Relief maintain? Are they true Protestants? friends to Confessions of Faith, and all willing and ready to sign our valuable standards? Are they Presbyterians or are they Independents? Often have you bawled out against our Established clergy for despising the National Covenant and the Solemn League; but do your new friends approve of them or not?"\* The fathers of the Relief had suffered too much from church authority and signing standards to be prompt in adopting them till they had sifted them, and fully made up their mind upon the subject.

A third mistake, which has also been industriously circulated, is that the Relief church was constituted simply and solely to give relief from patronage. This is not said in the minute. They "formed themselves into a presbytery for the relief of Christians oppressed in their Christian privileges." The language is general. Patronage was indeed a galling yoke which Government had writhed round the necks of the people of Scotland, and which they wished to break in pieces; but it was not the only form of oppression from which they were pledged to give relief. Gillespie himself was not directly suffering from patronage; but from what he considered an arbitrary, unjust, and unscriptural sentence of a church court, compelling him to do what his conscience told him was sinful, and which they had refused to relax. In various ways the laws and practices of the Establishment, and of other denominations also, were felt to be oppressive and sectarian, and from every galling and unscriptural yoke they resolved, in the strength of God as a church, to give relief. Their purpose was noble,—to open an asylum for "Christians" in general "oppressed in their Christian privileges;" but they soon found that they had a keen battle to fight against power, prejudice, and the sectarian spirit of the

age. It was too common to represent them as a party of latitudinarians, swallowing up, like the serpent rod of Moses, all other serpents of whatsoever size or breed; they were soon covered with unmeasured abuse from all quarters, and ran great peril of having their head crushed, as a dangerous and destructive viper. They became a mark to be shot at.



## CHAPTER XI.

RELIGIOUS STATE OF SCOTLAND AT THE FORMATION OF THE RELIEF PRESBYTERY IN 1761, AND THE RELATION WHICH IT ASSUMED TOWARD OTHER RELIGIOUS DENOMINATIONS.

UNDER the overruling providence of God a pressure of untoward circumstances called the Relief Presbytery into existence. It was received into the lap of an expecting nation. It was nursed by public favour, and, in return, when it came to maturity, afforded an asylum to the people in many districts of the country, who could neither remain in the Establishment, nor conscientiously join with any of the existing Dissenting denominations. It was needed, and it was produced.

Scotland at the time was just beginning to rise into prosperity, and reap some of the manifold advantages which the union with England has since bountifully produced. The unsettled state of things after the rebellion of 1745 was fast subsiding, and agriculture, commerce, and literature were diffusing their blessings; while the capital and enterprise of South Britain were gradually penetrating to the north of the Tweed. When George III., in 1760, ascended the throne amid the joyful acclamations of his subjects, he could congratulate his parliament on the reduction of the vast province of Canada, the success of his armies in the East Indies, the exploits of his ally, Frederick, king of Prussia, on behalf of Hanover, the state of his navy, the increasing commerce of the country, the cessation of internal factions. Statesmen of the highest talents, and of Roman virtue, surrounded his person. The nation was crowned with the laurels of victory, and held in her hand the horn of plenty.

A full cup is not easily borne. Wealth brought irreligion and pride and looseness of morals in its train. Scotland, and especially Edinburgh, became the seat of refinement and infidelity, acquired partly by visiting other nations, and which rapidly spread their

insidious poison over the rural districts of the country. Hume, and Kaimes, and such like philosophic infidels, were dangerous men for parsons and lawyers and country gentlemen to associate with. While they thought they were only honouring exalted genius, they were learning to frame sophisms against the scriptures, and to throw off the salutary restraints of religion. "It is this sort of gentlemen," said Boston of Oxnam, in his preface to Britain's Remembrancer, "who break dull jokes upon the Bible, blaspheme the mysteries of our holy religion, and cry aloud, in the spirit of wine, *Priestcraft, imposture, hypocrisy.*"

From the year 1752, when Gillespie was deposed, till 1761, when the Relief Presbytery was formed, there was no perceptible change in the government of the Church. The popular party was gradually wearing out, and arbitrary measures in settling vacant parishes were becoming both the law and the practice of the Assembly. Dr. Cuming was still its leader; for the leadership was not consigned by general consent to Dr. Robertson till 1763; and he was the mere mouthpiece of the Duke of Argyle, who received his instructions from court, which were all framed upon the Erastian principle of making the Church of Scotland a state church, and harmonizing her settlements with the law of the land, and not with the voice of the people. "It cannot be denied," says Sir H. Moncrieff, "by any one who examines the transactions of this period, that there were then as many examples of what have been called *violent settlements*, or inductions to pastoral charges in opposition to the great body of the people, as at any subsequent period."\*

Within the bosom of the Church there appeared a conformity to the world, and a reckless disregard of the official decencies of life which threatened the interests of vital godliness, even among those who ought to have supported it. The easy, social, and gentlemanly manners of the clergy of the Church of England after the Union, were aped and copied by the leading Moderates of the Church of Scotland. Instead of the sectarian sourness of the covenanting period, they verged to an opposite extreme of softness and complacency, chiming in with the literature and amusements of the age. The strong points of Calvinistic theology were thrown into the shade, and the moral virtues were decked out in their sentimental discourses with every possible finery

\* Dr. Erskine's Life, Appendix, p. 462.

of language. The cross of Christ was merely referred to in the way of distant allusion. In signing the Confession of Faith, some did not scruple to acknowledge it contained all their belief, and a great deal more. Home, who was next to Robertson among the young ministers, as a man of note, outstripped all his compeers in worldly conformity, and devoted his genius to the support of the stage. He had the temerity to write the tragedy of Douglas, which at first contained some very profane expressions, and to have it brought forward upon the Edinburgh stage. In doing this, he got a number of the Moderate ministers, in the first instance, to form themselves into a private theatrical party, and go through the different parts to try how it would act.\* In after arrangements, he and other clergymen were brought much into contact with actors and actresses, attended private rehearsals, and went to the theatre in considerable numbers, at its first representation, to see its effect. The smile of the fashionable world gave it a *run* even on the Edinburgh boards, at a time when theatrical amusements were so much abhorred as to be proscribed by the law of the land, and yet multitudes of the citizens, in spite of law and religion, crowded to the theatre to see it. Clergymen wrote pamphlets and notices in favour of it; and, in the hour of excitement, things were said and done utterly inconsistent with

\* "If we are to believe an authority good in theatrical matters,—the Edinburgh Weekly Chronicle newspaper, while under the management of Mr. Edward Hislop,—Dr. Carlyle, and others of his brethren, not only attended the rehearsals of Douglas, but themselves performed in the first of them: "It may not be generally known," says the authority just referred to, "that the first rehearsal took place in the lodgings in the Canongate occupied by Mrs. Sarah Warde, one of Digges's company; and that it was rehearsed by, and in presence of, the most distinguished literary characters Scotland ever could boast of. The following was the cast of the piece on the occasion:—

*Dramatis Personæ.*

Lord Randolph,	. . .	Dr. Robertson, principal, Edinburgh.
Glenalvon,	. . .	David Hume, historian.
Old Norval,	. . .	Dr. Carlyle, minister of Musselburgh.
Douglas,	. . .	John Home, the author.
Lady Randolph,	. . .	Dr. Fergusson, professor.
Anna (the Maid),	. . .	Dr. Blair, minister, High Church.

The audience that day, besides Mr. Digges and Mrs. Warde, were the Right Honourable Patrick Lord Elibank, Lord Milton, Lord Kames, Lord Momboddo, (the two last were then only lawyers,) the Rev. John Steele and William Home, ministers. The company, all but Mrs. Warde, dined afterwards at the Griskin Club, in the Abbey."—*Lives of Illustrious Scotsmen*, vol. iii. p. 73.

the character of men, who, as the religious instructors of the nation, were sinking their usefulness in leading the pastimes and pandering to the sports of the public stage.

When the season of madness had passed away, and men began to think rationally on what the ministers of religion were making themselves, the complaints, at first deep, became loud, and the church courts were compelled to take up the subject. At first the play-goers, backed by the Moderates, were shy of acknowledging any offence, and thought the storm would blow over; but public opinion being strong against them, they at last acknowledged their offence before their respective church courts. Some of them were rebuked, and others of them were suspended for a limited time. Home was in London, superintending the acting of his tragedy, when he was summoned to the bar of the presbytery of Haddington. He had not courage to meet the charges to be preferred against him. Government threw its protecting shield over him, and provided for him, as a persecuted son of genius, by nominating him to a sinecure office. He sent in his demission, which was accepted *simpliciter*, and the church of Athelstaneford was declared vacant. The Assembly enacted "that none of the ministers of this church do, upon any occasion, attend the theatre," and the matter was hushed up and fell quietly into oblivion. The fashionable taste of the city of Edinburgh was against the church. It was notorious also, that some members of deputations sent to London of the leading popular men, had attended the theatre while there, and it came from them with a bad grace to be punishing in the capital of Scotland, what they themselves had practised in the capital of England.

During the first ten years after Gillespie's deposition, the Secession had made remarkable progress, and that among changes and events which by many were predicted would prove their destruction. When the first Seceders left the Church of Scotland, testifying against its arbitrary measures, its countenance of patronage, its sufferance of error, and its general declension, they were very closely united, being of one opinion, and the leading men amongst them being near relations, or connected by inter-marriages.\* Spurred on by the quarrel with Whitefield, the spread of free communion principles in the Church of Scotland,

\* It is stated at page 26, that Mr. Fisher was married to a sister of Ralph Erskine. He was married to his niece. This does not in the slightest invalidate the reasoning which is there founded upon the fact of their affinity.



and a reverence for the covenants, they resolved to renew them “in a way and manner agreeable to their present situation and the circumstances of that particular period.” In doing this, they shifted from the original ground of Secession, which at first was “a withdrawing from the judicatories of the church” in the course of defection, and “not a withdrawing from ministerial communion with any of the godly ministers of the national church that are groaning under or writhing against the defection of the times.”\* Now they made the covenants, as sworn by themselves, “the term of ministerial and Christian communion:” and this they expressly say, “in opposition to the various deviations from it in our day.” This gives a key to the main intent of the deed; and which, like many a piece of legislation on the spur of the moment, and to provide for a present and temporary evil, unfortunately gave a closeness to the Secession body which it has been found much easier to introduce than remove; which led to separations among themselves, which good men on both sides deplored, but could not prevent; and which, to a great extent, led to the setting up of the Relief church as a separate denomination upon the very ground which they had originally occupied. Truly the church-militant is a battle-field; and, amid the shifting and conflict of parties, the deserted fortifications of one party are speedily occupied by another.

The scenes which followed the rupture between the Burghers and Antiburghers about the lawfulness of taking the Burgess oath, when the Antiburghers excommunicated their former brethren, and which flowed from an attempt to fix the terms in which the covenants were to be sworn, were most distressing. It may be safely said, in the language of the late Dr. Jamieson,—“Those who inflicted this censure acted, I am persuaded, according to their light. But there is ground to believe that the generality of those who succeeded them would not have gone so far.”† Congregations were torn asunder,—friendships were broken up,—unholy passions were called into play,—disputes about church property followed,—the pious wept, and the profane laughed that the ranks of the Seceders should be broken up. Boston was then minister of Oxnam; and, in his preface to “Schism,” he expresses those warm feelings which no doubt tended to keep him from joining the Secession, when he soon afterwards became a Dissenter: “This dreadful

\* Adherence of Ralph Erskine.

† Remarks on Rowland Hill’s Journal, p. 24.

Antichristian bull, designed to fix a mark of infamy on some of the chosen and faithful servants of Jesus Christ, has opened the mouths of the wicked, deadened the hearts of the saints, and astonished the most part of sober-thinking people. O my soul, come not thou into their secret in point of communion; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united in point of separation." \*

Out of evil, however, God brought forth good. The storm of human passion was made the means of greatly benefiting the interests of religion, and of diffusing dissenting principles over the country. Gillespie, after his deposition, halted to bring relief to oppressed parishes, and the Seceders would likely have contented themselves for many years with a single church in large towns; but, by their separation into two rival bands, their churches were speedily doubled, and fresh accessions were made in manifold places to their ranks. With all their bickerings about lesser matters, magnified unfortunately into an undue importance, the Seceders continued to preach the great truths of the gospel with much acceptance, were faithful and laborious ministers, and were exceedingly careful to preserve unimpaired the elective franchise of the people. In 1761, they were two large and powerful bodies, with missionaries in America and Ireland, and were gradually spreading themselves into England. They were taking deep root, and filling the land.

Next to the Seceders, the Cameronians were the most influential body of Dissenters when the Relief Church was constituted. They had but few ministers, and their congregations were small and widely scattered; but they had many favourers within the bosom of the Establishment. They adhered to the principles of Cameron, Renwick, and Shields, and others of that section of the Covenanters. Cameron, driven almost to madness by the hotness with which he was pursued by the emissaries of Charles in the wilds of Galloway, at the head of a small troop of soldiers, in 1680 entered the little burgh of Sanquhar, and, by written proclamation, declared war against the king and his government. "In the name of the true Presbyterian church and covenanted nation of Scotland, we disown Charles Stuart as having any right, title, or interest, in the crown of Scotland,—forfeited several years since by his tyranny, perjury, and breach of covenant

with God and his church; as also we, under the banner of our Lord Jesus Christ and Captain of salvation, do declare war with such a tyrant and usurper, and against all such as have in any way sided with, or acknowledged him, in his usurpation, civil and ecclesiastic." Such was the substance of a pretty long proclamation, which was afterwards renewed in different places in Scotland.

Cameron was slain as a rebel and outlaw on Airmoss; but his country soon made him a patriot and martyr, for the whole land rose as one man against the Stuarts, and drove them from the throne; whom he, in his eager haste for his own personal safety, had denounced a little too soon. In 1688, the nation accomplished the glorious Revolution, setting the crown upon the heads of William and Mary as constitutional sovereigns. All the presbyterian clergy acceded to the Revolution settlement of church and state. Even Shields, the author of the 'Hind Let Loose,' gave in his adhesion. In every great national compact, however, there are always some that are disappointed, because they have not obtained all that they anticipated; and if prejudice, or religion, or hallowed recollections, mingle up with their displeasure, the whole cup is soured, and poured out with indignation upon the ground as nothing worth. Various little knots of laymen along the southern moors of Scotland, where the Covenanters had mainly sheltered themselves, were greatly displeased that the covenants were not made the "bill of rights" by which the king and queen were to reign; and, therefore, they took up the same position towards them that they had done towards the Stuarts. They could not in their anger make a difference between a constitutional king and a tyrant. Because the covenants were wanting they still refused allegiance, and were ready again to bear all burdens, and with their property and life embark afresh in the old covenant cause. To maintain themselves in a state of religious confederation, as they had no ministers, they formed themselves into affiliated societies, which kept up a close correspondence and regular intercourse with each other.

Practically peaceful and industrious subjects, but theoretically keeping the sword of the covenant keen and bright in its scabbard, these societies were bound together as one man—had general meetings, and occasionally sent out a protestation, as a burning mountain casts up red-hot stones to show that it has still in its bowels matter for an eruption. At length, in 1707, they

obtained a minister who must have been singularly qualified for governing so many little republics. Mr. M'Millan has left a name which speaks volumes for his character, and which has been so highly esteemed by his followers, that 'the Reformed Presbytery,' which is their ecclesiastical name, is better known now by the name M'Millans than Cameronians.

Mr. M'Millan was ordained minister of the parish of Balma-ghie in 1701. He obtained his settlement under the Revolution constitution of the Church of Scotland, and was bound to adhere to it. Having, however, when a young man, been in connection with the Society people, he was scarcely ordained when he began to discover a warm attachment to the 'covenanted cause.' "After a considerable time spent in explaining the Covenants, preaching up the obligation of them, the duty of covenanting, sin of covenant-breaking, &c., and having, with the concurrence of his session, appointed a day of solemn humiliation and fasting, did thereafter solemnly swear the Covenants in way of adherence, declaring, with reference to the civil state, that they adhered no otherwise to that, than it adhered to the Covenants; and all in the parish were admitted to enter into this oath who willingly offered themselves to the Lord, and who, after trial, were found qualified in some suitable measure." \*

This was neither more nor less than a disowning of the Revolution settlement of religion, and an actual withdrawal of allegiance from the government—"as they were no otherwise to adhere to the state than it adhered to the covenants." Now the Revolution government was set up on the ruins of the covenants. It was founded on toleration, and not on covenanted uniformity. The covenants were buried under it. The presbytery of Kirkcudbright therefore speedily appointed a visitation of his parish; libelled him on the spot; and without dealing with him, or allowing him ten free days to answer the libel, deposed him for "irregularities" and "disorderly courses." He considered himself harshly and informally dealt with; and, during the altercation, and before the sentence was passed, he threw off his allegiance to the Revolution-church, and instead of appealing to synod, "protested and appealed to the first free and faithful General Assembly of the Church of Scotland." He kept possession of his pulpit,—the people kept possession of the keys of the church,—and the preachers

\* Vindication of the Rev. Mr. M'Millan, senior, by his son, p. 223.



sent by the presbytery were not even allowed to cross its threshold. Amid no little disturbance on Sabbath, he, by popular opinion and muscular power, continued to exercise the functions of the parish-minister.

He considered the sentence of the presbytery null and void ; denounced the appointment of a successor as “ a vile intrusion ” upon him and the parish ; and even went to a meeting of the presbytery to protest against it. He had no sooner set his face within the door of the presbytery than the moderator summoned him upon the spot to appear before the meeting of the General Assembly in Edinburgh. Mr. M‘Millan appeared before the Commission, in June 1704, and being kindly and smoothly “ interrogate,” “ he declared that it was his judgment, That the sentence of a church-judicatory ought to be submitted to, though unjust, and redress to be craved and expected from superior judicatories, according to the comely order of this church ; and as for his own practice, he acknowledged his fault, through mistake, in contravening the above-mentioned sentence, which sentence he earnestly desires may be taken off, and he reponed to the exercise of his ministry at Balmaghie. And lastly, he hereby declares his sincere resolution to maintain unity and concord in this church, according to the word of God, and presbyterial principles, and particularly the obligations he came under at his ordination. *Sic subscribitur,*  
J. MACKMILLAN.” \*

Ministers were now appointed by the presbytery to supply Balmaghie pulpit. Mr. M‘Millan ceased to preach ; and, after a short time, he expected to have the sentence of deposition removed, and to be restored again to his parish ; but these things, which he considered bare justice, being delayed longer than he expected, and the people having still the keys, he reinstated himself in his former position, resumed his labours as a parish-minister, and kept possession of the manse and church for several years, “ notwithstanding of all the attempts made by presbytery, patron, and intruder, to have him cast out.” In 1707, he received a harmonious call to be the minister of “ the Societies,” whose principles he now openly professed to hold ; and, for about three years, he ministered jointly to his parish, who continued mostly with him, and to the Societies sprinkled over the face

\* The Testimony Deserted, by William Wilson, p. 7.

of the country; but, ultimately, he was ejected from the manse and glebe by the strong arm of law, and became the faithful and devoted minister of the covenanted presbyterian witnessing remnant.

With the view of bearing an open testimony to their principles before the world, and showing what was the constitution of their church, the M'Millans renewed the covenants at Auchensaugh near Douglas, 1712, with "a solemn acknowledgment of public sins, and solemn engagement to duties particularly adjusted to these times." It is a very long document, embracing a great variety of particulars. Among the public sins which they acknowledge are—"the nation's accepting of William and Mary, and, after them, the present possessor of the crown (Anne), to be supreme magistrates, while they are knowingly and professedly Prelatical in their judgment;—the receiving, admitting, and subjecting to such, for kings and queens over these realms, as are not brought under covenant ties and obligations to be for God and religion in their own persons and families;—nay, who maintain and allow prelacy and sectarian errors in their dominions contrary to the trust reposed in them as magistrates to punish and extirpate false religions and heresies, and bring the wheel over the broachers and maintainers thereof,—the paying to them cess and other subsidies, and taking oaths of allegiance;—the fatal union with England, contrary to and inconsistent with the covenant, and upon such conditions as formally and explicitly establish prelacy as the church government there to all generations. The discipline of the church hath also been circumscribed, limited, and bounded by acts of parliament tolerating prelacy in Scotland on certain conditions, so that ministers, without transgressing these acts, cannot draw out the sword of discipline,—the maintainers and promoters of Quakerism, Bourignianism, Arminianism, &c., are not punished, but protected by the state,—laws are not put in operation against papists in their full extent according to the covenant,—prelacy is not extirpated,—malignants are not brought to condign punishment,—liberty by a late act of parliament to that pestilent generation of Quakers who keep their general meeting yearly in Edinburgh, being guarded by a company of the town guards. The Assembly, in none of their addresses to their king or queen, declared unto them the indispensable necessity of renewing the covenants, nor asserted the intrinsic power of the church, and yet many of us have not testified our dislike of these backslidings, but have received

the sacraments, and the privilege of marriage at their hands, and paid them tithes and stipends.”

Among the solemn duties to which they bound themselves,—“we shall never consent for any reason whatever, that the penal statutes made against papists shall be repealed, but shall, when opportunity offers, be ready to concur in putting them to a due and vigorous execution.” As to Protestants,—“because we are not in a case to bring to a due trial and punishment con-dign to the merit of their offences, malignants, and evil instruments, we shall endeavour to keep ourselves as far as possible from any compliance with, or approbation of, their cause and courses. Because many have laboured to supplant the liberties of the true kirk of late by indulgences, and toleration, &c.,—we shall neither hear their sermons, nor pay their stipends, while they continue unfaithful.—We shall not corroborate the unjust authority of magistrates, supreme and subordinate, who are popish and prelatical in their principles, and tolerate sectarian errors in their demeanour, by paying them cess, and supply for upholding their corrupt courts, and armies employed in an unjust and antichristian quarrel, or by compearing before their judicatories, either to defend or pursue lawsuits, or upon any other account.”

Such were some of the principles, amongst a great number of good ones, fixed on as terms of communion, by Mr. M<sup>c</sup>Millan, and his followers. It is deeply to be regretted that the Auchensaugh covenant was constructed, and solemnly sworn to, so soon after the irritation incident on his ejection by the justices from Balmaghie. It treats the revolution church and government as if they had been as bad as hellish policy could make them. This fundamental deed of the body gave a colour to all their subsequent enactments. In 1761, the very year that the Relief Presbytery was instituted, they issued a testimony, but it scarcely modifies any of the Auchensaugh principles, though it explains many of them more at large, and wages war with the Seceders about principles of government. Nothing could be more opposite to the opinions of Gillespie and Boston, than those of Mr. M<sup>c</sup>Millan, and yet like Gillespie, he suffered to a considerable extent from an arbitrary infliction of church censure. He went back to the times when the church was above the state, instead of going forward to the enlightened principles of government, introduced by William and Mary. History fair-

ly laid open is, indeed, a study of human character, and no man can say what rebellious persecuting principles a person may speculatively hold, while yet, controlled by his better principles, he is pious, honourable, and highly respected for his worth. The radical errors of the Covenanters lay in their making the king the servant of the church by swearing her covenants, suffering no one to hold a civil office unless he did the same, and putting the sword into the magistrate's hand to avenge, corporally and temporally, both tables of the Law, when the church met in council issued the decree.

The darkest hour, however, precedes the break of day. Scotland was long cursed with the phantom of a religious uniformity, which was to be obtained by the covenants and the power of the civil magistrate. The Rev. Mr. Glas, minister of Tealing, near Dundee, was the first to discover, and openly maintain, in Scotland, correct views concerning the nature of Messiah's kingdom. Having furnished himself with weapons from the armoury of Owen, he smote the image of covenanted uniformity, which so many had been worshipping; and it fell maimed and broken upon the threshold of the New Testament church, and could never afterwards be replaced. He was brought before the synod of Angus and Mearns, 1728, for his supposed heresies, and, after various steps of ecclesiastical procedure, was deposed from being a minister of Jesus Christ. On his trial before the synod he held, —That there was no warrant in the New Testament for a national church; that the magistrate's power, whether he was a Christian or not, had no place in it; that he had no right to punish men as heretics; that the National Covenant and Solemn League were without warrant in the sacred volume; and that the true Reformation was to be carried on by the word and Spirit of the Lord Jesus.

His views he afterwards stated at length in various publications, and particularly in "The Testimony of the King of Martyrs." He made the first open breach in the Church of Scotland after the Revolution. During nearly forty years there had been no deposition for *heresy*. M'Millan was deposed for a kind of overt act of rebellion. Public attention was drawn strongly towards the case of Glas and his novel opinions.

"To separate from the Establishment was then reckoned the most awful heretical step that could be conceived." Malice and bigotry did not spare to wreak their vengeance upon him.



The opinions of Glas, however, silently made their way. His works, though written in a cumbrous style, had much power; for he was a man of great strength of mind, and every serious disciple saw the propriety of rather founding the church of Christ upon the New Testament, than upon any act of parliament, or covenant, formed by the wisdom of man.

Mr. Glas was much benefited for a time by the accession of Mr. Robert Sandeman; but afterwards the party was deeply injured by his writings.\* So long as Sandeman gave prominence to the original principles of Glas, that national churches were unscriptural, and that every church, in its government, was independent of all other churches, these opinions gained ground; but when he, in 1757, attacked the views of Harvey, Boston, and Erskine, on the nature of faith, and coarsely denounced them as the corrupters of the truth, the pious part of the population withdrew their confidence from him, and the Glasites henceforward rather declined than increased. Had it not been for this outrageous step, their churches would have greatly multiplied. The people of Scotland, who had been accustomed to consider saving faith not only as a *receiving* of Christ with the *understanding*, but also as a *resting* upon Christ with the *heart* for salvation, were startled at the asseveration of Sandeman, "that every one who believes the report of the apostles about the death of Christ, and is persuaded that the event actually happened as testified by them, is justified, and finds relief to his guilty conscience." He excluded every thing like wish or desire to be saved from entering into the nature of faith, and held that "faith consisted solely in the fact of Christ's atoning death *standing true to the mind*." Many could not understand such metaphysics. They might be clear, but they were cold as ice. People were also shocked at the want of seriousness and the worldly levity which appeared among them, and which they defended on the principle that certain amusements were not condemned by name in scripture,—as if the theatre, and every fashionable amusement, should be named and reprobated there. Small churches were formed in Dundee, Perth, Dunkeld, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Paisley, and other towns; but they never had much influence on the public mind, because their sectarian opinions shut them out of the pale

\* The Glasites and Sandemanians are the same sect. They are known by the former name in Scotland, and by the latter in England.

of the Christian public, though many more unquestionably were leavened with Congregational Glasite opinions than ever had honesty or fortitude to rally round its standard. Sandeman had gone to London, to form a church in the metropolis among the converts he had made by his writings the year before the Relief Presbytery was constituted. Other churches were afterwards erected in various parts of England. Had they united the suavity of the gospel with their spiritual views of the Messiah's kingdom, there would have been little room for the Relief.

It will yet appear that some of the Fathers of the Relief have been more indebted to Glas for their views of the kingdom of Christ than what at first sight appears. They took the outlines of his system, but not his crotchets. This, after all, is only what might have been expected, for men gather their opinions oftener from the press than from inward cogitations. The mark of a great and candid mind is to take in the light that is shining around him, from whatever quarter it comes.

Baptist opinions also took root in Scotland near to the time when the Relief church was organized. It was about 1760 that Sir William Sinclair, Bart., in the county of Caithness, baptized a few of his tenants, who had, along with himself, adopted Baptist tenets. In 1763, Mr. Robert Carmichael, formerly an Anti-burgher clergyman in Cupar-Angus, and Mr. Archibald M'Lean, a printer, both of whom belonged to the Glasite church in Glasgow, rather undesignedly, in the first instance to themselves, became the founders of the first Baptist church in Scotland. A case of discipline arose in the Glasgow Glasite church which was difficult to manage. Glas was sent for to preside on the occasion. Mr. M'Lean thought the individual was sacrificed out of deference to a ruling faction. Messrs. M'Lean and Carmichael thereupon both withdrew. It was after their separation, and *not before it*, that the subject of Baptism presented itself to their mind. Being unconnected with any religious society, and contemplating their religious prospects, Mr. Carmichael one day said, "What think you of the subject of Baptism?" Shortly after, Mr. Carmichael was called to become the pastor of a Scotch Independent church in Edinburgh. Mr. M'Lean prosecuted the hint which had been given him, corresponded with Carmichael, who shortly after avowed Baptist opinions to the church of which he was pastor, and five of its members declared themselves of the same sentiments. At that time there was no

society of Baptists in Scotland, nor any person to whom they could apply to baptize them in what they now considered a scriptural way. Mr. Carmichael went to London in 1765, and was baptized by Dr. Gill. On his return, he baptized seven persons in Edinburgh, and Mr. M'Lean having soon after gone over to Edinburgh for the purpose, was baptized also. In 1768, Messrs. Carmichael and M'Lean, who had jointly introduced Baptist opinions into the country, became joint pastors of the same church in Edinburgh, and laboured earnestly and with no little success for the diffusion of their peculiar opinions. "In the year 1769, Mr. M'Lean came over to Glasgow, and baptized several individuals in the Clyde, when the novelty of the thing excited considerable curiosity, and thousands of persons assembled in the Green, at the Herd's house, to witness the strange scene. This was the origin of the first Baptist church in Glasgow."\* Small Baptist churches were about the same time formed in Montrose, Dundee, and other towns; and the sect, from the talents of M'Lean, might have spread far more extensively, had the Glasgow church not become infected with the Sabellian heresy, and had not M'Lean himself openly denied the eternal Sonship of Christ. The most of their converts were made from the Glasite churches; and, as the founders themselves of the Scotch Baptist church had also belonged to that communion, they carried with them many of their forms and religious observances. The Scotch Baptist churches are modelled upon the platform of Glas. They have nearly the same views of faith—as being a simple assent of the mind to the truth—are but a shade more catholic in their principles of communion; and while they are Congregational in their church government, they require unanimity in their ecclesiastical decisions, which, as might be expected, has broken church after church into fragments. It is to their credit that they have not the same horror of a devout religious profession as those from whom they sprang, and that, instead of conforming to the world, in its amusements, like the Glasites, that they may not be branded as Pharisees, they are grave, strict, and devout in their deportment in a high degree. Mr. M'Lean did good service in attacking the worldly pastimes of his old friends; for he both checked them in their *religious* amusements, and secured the new denomination, of which he was

\* Mem. of Mr. M'Lean, Works, vol. vi. p. 25.

the principal founder, from that reproach which otherwise would have come upon them.

Another party appeared in Scotland about the same period as the Relief. The Rev. Robert Ferrier of Largo, Fife, and the Rev. James Smith of Newburn, both of the Establishment, were constrained, from conscientious motives, to give in their demission, and become dissenters. Though their case is not generally known, they seem to have taken this step more under the influence of calm Christian principle than almost any other persons who ever left the Establishment. A minister of the Established church, in a neighbouring parish, on his deathbed, told Mr. Ferrier, “with bitter anguish and regret, that he lamented, as a dying man, in the view of the judgment-seat, that he had stifled his convictions, and had continued in connection with the national church,”\* and begged of him to read “Glas’s King of Martyrs,” and compare it with the scriptures. Mr. Ferrier obeyed the dying request of his friend, and the consequence was, a thorough persuasion that Civil Establishments of religion were opposed to the spiritual nature of the Gospel, and that the Scotch Presbyterian church was not founded on the word of God. When he was prosecuting his scriptural inquiries, he opened his mind to Mr. Smith of Newburn, who was exactly difficulted as he was. Attempts were made by their clerical friends to smooth down their scruples, solve their difficulties, and to retain them in the Establishment; but, “After many a painful struggle,” says Mr. Ferrier, “to sit still if possible where we were, and eat our loaf contentedly, we were obliged to resign our livings, and bid adieu to the Establishment.” A few of both their congregations adhered to them. A small church was built for them at Balchristie, of which they became the “elders.” It was formed very much on the principles of Mr. Glas,—independent in its form of church government,—having teaching elders who received no salary,—adhering to the doctrines of grace,—observing the Lord’s Supper every Sabbath, and the kiss of charity at the admission of members. From unfavourable impressions which they had received of the tyrannical conduct of Glas towards his party, they carefully avoided all intercourse with him, though his writings had been the source from which they had derived their views of the spiritual nature of Christ’s kingdom; the

\* Ferrier’s Preface to “The King of Martyrs,” p. 15.



unscriptural nature of an establishment; and they persevered in shunning him even though he invited them to become companions with him, and those connected with him in the afflictions and consolations of the gospel. To correct the gross misrepresentations which were afloat concerning their conduct in leaving the church, they published an account of their case in 1768,\* and in a very becoming spirit defended their views, and the form of church government which they had adopted.

About this time (1768) a small party were in the act of seceding from the Relief church of Glasgow, under the pastoral care of Mr. Cruden, who was not qualified to preside over a large congregation. At the head of this party were David Dale, Archibald Paterson, and Matthew Alexander, who separated themselves from the great body of the church, and met along with a few others in a private house, for reading the scriptures, and Christian fellowship. The "case" of the two Fife brethren attracted their attention, and a deputation being sent to Balchristie, Mr. Ferrier was brought to Glasgow, and appointed, along with David Dale, joint elder, to take the oversight of the church. "At this time (1770) the church consisted of about twenty members of both sexes. When their new house† was first opened, they were visited by an immense assemblage of infuriated people. They had many adversaries. Indeed, there was no denomination endured more reproach and ridicule than Mr. Dale and his friends did at this time, not only from the baser sort, but also from many of those who showed themselves to be the lineal descendants of the ancient Pharisees. Mr. Dale was for a while openly insulted on the streets, and looked upon as a person that ought not to be suffered to live. The meeting-house was violently assaulted with stones; but by 'patient enduring' they overcame, and 'in well-doing' put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. Many clave unto them, not only in the city, but likewise from Hamilton and Paisley."‡ Other churches of the same character were soon after erected in Perth, Methven, Edinburgh, Dundee, Kirkealdy, London, &c. Such was the commencement of the Old Scotch

\* The Case of James Smith, late minister at Newburn, and of Robert Ferrier, late minister of Largo, truly represented and defended. 1768. Edinburgh.

† The house was mainly built by Mr. Paterson, who was a tallow-chandler, and hence its nickname, *Candle kirk*.

‡ Historical Sketches of the Rise of the Scots Old Independents, &c. (by James M'Garin.) Colne. 1814.

Independents. Although they have never been numerous, yet the doctrines of grace, religious liberty, and the power of Dissent were greatly benefited by them. David Dale was a host in himself, from his character and the station in society in which he afterwards moved. He kept by his party, and the city of Glasgow bowed to him and made him its provost. Ferrier did not continue long in connection with his new friends. He quarrelled with Dale and the congregation, because, as he himself says, "they maintain that it is lawful to lay up treasures on earth."\* In this expression there is no doubt a hit at the swelling treasures of Dale in his bank, and at Lanark cotton-mills. He joined the Glasites, and Mr. Dale got another colleague, Mr. William Cleland, an operative,† to whom he regularly sent a £20 note every quarter, under a blank cover, as a kind of indirect payment of his services. This was a great addition to the income of a person working at his loom, but he retained very little of it, as the most of it was put back again into the plate on Sabbath, for the poor. This is very characteristic of the party; for they are generally of a humane and charitable disposition, loving their own church indeed, and close in their principles of communion, but not insensible to the excellencies of others, and ready to befriend them amid the trials and difficulties of life.

Though Mr. Whitefield repeatedly visited Scotland, both prior to the deposition of Gillespie and after it, he formed no churches on the north side of the Tweed. He was satisfied with preaching in the Established churches, and kindling, wherever he went, a sacred flame which he left burning behind him. Wesley visited Scotland for the first time, in 1751, the year before Gillespie was deposed. His Arminian opinions were far from being popular in Scotland. There is a large space of common ground, however, which Arminians and Calvinists can equally occupy, and he was too good a tactician to assail what he might consider the prejudices of the people. During his first visit, he met with a very friendly reception. He was accompanied by Mr. Hopper, whom he left at Musselburgh to plant and nourish Wesleyan churches in Scotland. In 1752, he again visited Scotland, and received much countenance from Dr. Gillies of Glasgow, who was one of the most catholic-minded clergymen that ever lived. On his third visit, a few years afterwards, he had the prospect

\* Preface, p. 27.

† Cleland's Enumeration of Glasgow, p. 75.

of many followers; but his expectations were blasted by Dr. Erskine of Edinburgh, who had been the great friend of Whitefield, sounding the alarm as to his Arminian principles. Wesley being denounced as a heretic by such a leading theologian as Dr. Erskine, sunk in public estimation, and the societies which he formed in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Dundee, Inverness, Dumfries, and other places, were small and rickety, and never rose to an importance commensurate with the success of Methodism in other parts of the world. Dr. Erskine republished Hervey's *Aspasio Vindicated*, with a Preface written by himself in 1765. After stating a variety of points in which Wesley had adroitly concealed his peculiar opinions, so as not to offend Scotch Calvinists, he, towards the close of his remarks, uses the following complimentary, but also strongly condemnatory, sentences:—"Of the sincere piety of some of the teachers (of Mr. Wesley's Methodism), nay, even of their sound principles, the publisher would think favourably. But when he reflects that one is at the head of their societies, who has blended with some precious gospel truths a medley of Arminian, Antinomian, and enthusiastic errors, he thinks it high time to sound an alarm to all who would wish to transmit to posterity the pure faith once delivered to the saints."\* The controversy went on for several years, but Wesleyan Methodism never recovered from the repeated wounds inflicted upon it by Erskine, and it still continues in a sickly and dying state in Scotland, though flourishing actively and vigorously in England, and other parts of the world.

The Scotch Episcopalians were now in a very depressed state. The year 1745—fatal to the prospects of the Stuart family—inflicted a stigma of disloyalty upon the Scotch Episcopals in the eye of the Revolution government, which was not easily wiped out, and which led to the enacting of several very harsh laws against them. Every nonjurant Episcopal clergyman was now forbidden to preach or perform divine service in any house or family of which he was not the master, or even in his own house, if more than four persons, besides his own family, were present. This was little else than a prohibition of Episcopacy. About the time of Gillespie's deposition they were found pleading for liberty to worship God according

\* Erskine's Life, p. 253.

to their conscience, in language very different from what they had once employed towards the hunted and butchered Presbyterians. There is all the difference in the world between being the persecuted and the persecutors. Men who, at the point of the sword, once summoned others instantly to conform, now pled,—"That as they were supported by the bounty of their hearers, which no charitable Christian ought to grudge, so they ought to be allowed the same liberty and freedom which every mechanic enjoys, and not be clogged more than he is in following after their employment."\* The government, however, were not so sure that their employment "was as necessary and useful as that" of a common tradesman, as they had been found trading in rebellion, and, therefore, they, for several years, carried the laws pretty rigorously into effect; and a presbyterian government in church and state was thus stained in its turn, to a certain extent, with persecuting for the sake of conscience. Episcopal clergymen were thrown into prison. Their chapels were burnt, and 200 ministers, belonging to the denomination, were compelled to worship with their flocks in secret, or under the protecting shade of night. After several years, the ferretting of *nonjurant* ministers was discouraged, and fell into desuetude; but the laymen who belonged to their communion obtained no redress, and it may be added, though a little out of place, that the laws, stripping them of their political privileges, were not relaxed till 1792, when the last of the Stuart family being dead, and the Scotch Episcopal clergy having offered their dutiful allegiance to the Hanoverian family, it was graciously received, and all the penal laws against them and their people were repealed, and their chapels were thrown open to all ranks of the laity who were disposed to enter. Not a few of the richer families of the country have availed themselves of the privilege.

Besides these various sects of Protestants, there were in the north, particularly, a considerable number of Catholics; but, throughout the low country, they were so few as to have little or no influence upon the state of society. Popular opinion ran so strongly against them, that scarcely any person in private society would acknowledge himself a Papist. A few Quakers also might be found inoffensively pursuing their business in the larger towns; but even their quiet habits gave them little favour

\* Scots Mag., 1752, p. 389.



among the Scotch adherents of the Covenants, and nothing but the strong arm of law shielded them from persecution.

It was in this state of things, and amongst all these parties, that the Relief Presbytery was constituted at Colingsburgh in 1761, and took up a position different from that of the other religious denominations of the country. Public opinion called for it. There was an opening either for the Relief or for some other party holding similar opinions, coming forward, and carrying on the religious interests of the country. It is evident from the variety of sects, which had either lately commenced, or were commencing, that the mind of Scotland was deeply agitated on religious subjects, and on different forms of church government. The old doctrine of presbyterian uniformity was at an end. The public were sick of the interference of the state about religion. Whitefield had convinced the people that powerful heart-melting preaching was not necessarily connected with a Geneva gown and bands. He had loosened them, as with the rod of a magician, from a bigoted attachment to the Scotch Establishment, and yet he left them hanging by its walls. The rigorous enforcement of the law of patronage, according to the civil statutes of the country, made many eagerly wish to get quit of all connection with the church courts of the Establishment, which, in every contested settlement, *settled* upon them two things,—the patron's presentee, and an immense load of expenses. Any thing would now be preferred rather than submission to their jurisdiction. The Secession had unfortunately greatly damaged themselves in the estimation of those who were not involved in the discussion by their divisions, dissensions, and lawsuits; and particularly by the sentences of excommunication pronounced by the Antiburghers against the Burghers throughout different parts of the country. The Glasites, who might have filled the land, had become fierce metaphysical disputants about faith; and from being shy about the exercise of social prayer, and the usual mode of sanctifying the Sabbath, were considered as being too much conformed to the world. They, and all the other sects that had been formed according to their model of church government, had deprived themselves of all power of operating upon the public mind by adopting the system of lay elders as preachers, instead of having a learned and regular ministry, paid for their labours, and devoting all their time and energy to pastoral duties. Wesley was a wonderful man; but his system, after the *exposé* of Erskine, was stripped of its at-

tractive influence. The Relief therefore stepped in as a church altogether separate from the Establishment, and meeting to a considerable extent what the necessities of the times required. One of its first ministers being deposed by the Establishment; another of them having, for "weighty reasons," resigned all connection with its judicatories; and the third being a Dissenter from England, there was no danger of their symbolizing with the arbitrary proceedings of its church courts. The presbyterian platform which they adopted, agreed well with the previous opinions of the people. Besides, as both Gillespie and Boston before their ecclesiastical union, were willing to hold communion with all visible saints, the evils of schism were supposed to be greatly moderated by the new party, as no doubt they were, and would have continued to be so, if the Church of Scotland had not "intercommuned" the Relief church as no church of Christ.

It has been often said that it was a great misfortune that Gillespie and Boston did not join with the Secession instead of distracting the country with a new party. They were, however, the best judges of the step which they took. No one can now see with their eyes, as he cannot be placed in their circumstances. No doubt the matter was discussed by them, and fully considered. Had the Secession been united among themselves at the time, their procedure might have been different, as Boston of Ettrick and the Erskines were of one mind on nearly all religious subjects, and particularly on the Marrow Controversy, and the affection of the fathers often descends to the children. But now there was a keen division in the camp of the Erskines; and, for the Relief Presbytery to have thrown themselves in among the Antiburghers or Burghers, was to cast themselves, in either case, into the fire. There were two points also on which they differed from the Seceders; and which, from being at the time magnified into undue importance, rendered a union hopeless even though attempted. Both sides of the Secession "maintained the binding obligation of the National and Solemn League and Covenant; and made this a test of Christian as well as ministerial communion. But the Relief brethren did not impose the covenants, and as to Christian communion, they made welcome every real and unblemished Christian."\* They,

\* Reasons by a Layman of the Presbytery of Relief, (John Mowbray, Elder, College-street,) which induced him to join the majority in reference to sustaining the call to Mr. Pirrie, to Blairlogie. Edin. 1769. P. 2.

as already stated, held the same ground which the Seceders did at their breach with the Establishment, and were willing to keep up an intercourse in the sealing ordinances of the gospel with good Christians of all denominations. By keeping themselves out from either party, and holding the original principle of the Erskines, they no doubt contributed most powerfully to check the sectarian spirit which was at that time unhappily gaining ground, amid much heat and passion; and afterwards to lead to a full examination of the doctrine of national covenanting, which issued in the very best results. The Relief became the common object of attack; and, in badgering them, both sections of the Secession saw that they were friends, using the same weapons against the Relief, and that it was advisable to lay aside their lesser differences, and go back to the first principles of their body when they were both one, and when the burgess oath and the covenants were no terms of communion. In doing this, they happily united; and no sooner were they united, than they felt that they brought themselves so much into one with the original principles of Gillespie and Boston, that there was no valid reason why they should fight with them about minor matters. This has been the result after a war of pamphlets for 70 years. Looking back, therefore, at things from the present era, it was perhaps well for healing the wounds of a bleeding cause that the Relief took fresh ground for themselves, and thus drew off the attention of the Seceders from their unnatural domestic quarrel to a third party, who, after much rivalry and opposition, is discovered to be a friend. In the succeeding narrative these things will yet be fully brought out.

The great advantage which the Relief church had at its organization was, no doubt, in its keeping to scripture, (as their first minute bears,) and not trammelling themselves too much with human formularies, and even when adopted as a declaration of the sense in which they understood the scriptures, giving them only a subordinate place. The Secession had gone before them, and helped them to avoid Scylla and Charybdis. Glas and Whitefield had by this time greatly enlightened the public mind; the former, on the spiritual nature of Messiah's kingdom; and the other, on the necessity of preaching Christ, and of trusting more to the power of the Spirit, and less to acts of parliament and national covenants, for the success of religion. On these points the public mind was now considerably well informed;

and the Relief fathers had all the advantage of it. Accordingly, it will soon appear that their opponents attacked them fiercely, as being copyists from Glas, and a mere sect of Scotch Methodists.



## CHAPTER XII.

### ACCESSION OF VARIOUS CONGREGATIONS TO THE RELIEF PRESBYTERY; AND THE SCHISM OVERTURE OF THE ASSEMBLY.

AFTER the Presbytery was constituted, it became a rallying point to various parishes that were suffering from the intrusion of ministers, and who could not enjoy under the Establishment that liberty which they eagerly longed for. They fled to the Relief brethren for counsel and aid, like doves to their windows. They were as persons that dreamed when they felt themselves standing in an open place, and enjoying that liberty wherewith Christ hath made his people free.

LOGIE.—The first parish that applied to them for relief was Logie, Stirlingshire. Two patrons claimed the right of presenting to the charge. They both presented the same individual; but he not proving acceptable, and having the offer of another parish where he did not expect to meet with the same opposition, he prudently declined a settlement among an unwilling and offended people. The person on whom the session and the great majority of the parish had set their affections, was Mr. William Cruden, minister of Logie-Pert, Angus. They petitioned the presbytery for a moderation in his behalf, because the right of presenting, as they alleged from the lapse of time, had now devolved upon the court. The presbytery, however, declined to act upon the *jus devolutum*, and both patrons again presented,—the one presented the person who was the choice of the people, and the other presented Mr. Wright, who was a very obnoxious candidate. The Assembly preferred the unpopular presentee, and enjoined his ordination according to the rules of the church. The remonstrance of the people was of no avail. Their temper was ruffled, and their indignation was considerably roused from the fact, that they had been on the very eve of getting Mr. Cruden, while yet they were balked at last by the judgment of the Assembly.

The parish was not very populous. It contained a spirited little village called the Blair, at some distance from the parish church, and this was fixed upon as the centre of an ecclesiastical movement, by which they resolved that they would practically rid themselves of church domination and the bondage of patronage. The affair had been before the Assembly both in 1759 and 1760; and on both occasions it had enjoined the settlement, and on the last “empowered the Commission finally to determine on any question relating to its completion.” But if this foreclosed all farther opposition on the part of the people, it also stirred them up to take—like the parish of Kilconquhar—decided measures. The cases of both churches were disposed of in the same Assembly, and they looked in the same direction for relief. On the 16th June, 1762, Messrs. Gillespie, Boston, and Colier, met as a presbytery at Blair-Logie—“and solemnly admitted the Rev. John Warden, late minister of the gospel, Cuderston, in South Britain, to be minister of the gospel in the dissenting congregation, Blair-Logie.”\* This was practically teaching the people of Scotland how they might secure their religious rights and privileges, for if the people of the small village of Blair-Logie could rear a church, and voluntarily support religious ordinances among themselves, no oppressed parish need brook church and state enactments if their conscience was aggrieved.

Mr. Warden was a truly pious man, and went among his brethren by the familiar appellation of the *good* Mr. Warden. It appears by the Minute-book of the session, that besides observing the days of fasting and humiliation, which the presbytery was then accustomed to appoint, “on account of the decay of religion in the land, and the withdrawing of the Spirit of God from religious ordinances;”† he had congregational fasts for the same purpose, in addition to those connected with the sacrament. The church, however, was not long to enjoy the unction of his holy services. In the close of the year 1768, the hand of affliction lay heavily upon him. In the month of November, Mr. Cruden, who by this time had become a Relief minister, and was settled in Glasgow, “preached the action sermon by reason of Mr. Warden’s illness; and on the 29th of December he departed this life,” leaving behind him a widow

\* Minute Book of Blair-Logie.

† Ibid.

and an attached flock to weep over his early and unexpected removal. This was a sad stroke to the infant presbytery, which could ill spare any of its ministers, and eventually it produced something like a rupture in the presbytery of Relief.

AUCHTERMUCHTY.—During the same year, 1762, in which Mr. Warden was introduced into the pastorate of Blair-Logie, the General Assembly, contrary to the judgment of the presbytery of Cupar, and in opposition to the will of the congregation, enjoined that Mr. Thomas Mutter, on the presentation of the patron, Moncrieff of Redie, should be translated from Lesswalt to Auchtermuchty; and to crush all opposition, and prevent all grounds of delay, “they empowered the commission finally to determine on any complaint, reference, or appeal, which might, in reference to it, be regularly brought before them.” This secured the translation of Mutter, but it also secured the erection of the standard of the Relief presbytery in the place. The people in a body came out from the Establishment. They set themselves vigorously to the undertaking, and speedily erected a place of worship. In the year 1763, they applied to the church of Colingsburgh, which was in their neighbourhood, for a copy of their constitution; and in the same year, Mr. Thomas Scott of Hexham, who, three years before, had declined the Colingsburgh invitation, was ordained over them in connection with the Relief Presbytery.

BELLSHILL—which is situated in the parish of Bothwell—was added to the presbytery in the same year. The Rev. James Baillie of Shotts had been translated to Bothwell, on a presentation contrary to nearly the unanimous remonstrance of the parish. Only eight names were attached to his call. The people were very unwilling to leave the denomination in which they had been brought up, and nothing but stern necessity and a sense of duty, so that the pure gospel and the liberty of the church of Christ might be preserved among them, constrained them to set up a religious institution for themselves. On the day of Mr. Baillie’s induction, they even went so far as to empower the presbytery elder to beg of the presbytery, “that the elders should be allowed to give *lines* to persons to receive sealing ordinances in the neighbouring churches, and that they would continue to attend the ministry of Mr. Baillie on ordinary occasions, till they could judge for themselves of his qualifications;

but this was absolutely denied them.”\* The presbytery, indeed, though they shrunk, during a whole twelvemonth, from carrying into effect his induction, and always expected things would become more peaceful, had no such dispensing power as to sealing ordinances. Those who will be free must themselves strike the blow. They instantly set about purchasing ground, and building a church, and resolved that they would have the choice of their own pastor, as they thought themselves better qualified for this than the “factor” of the duke of Hamilton, their patron, who was a minor.

On application to the presbytery of Relief, the presbytery was careful to ascertain their destitute circumstances, and readily afforded them the necessary aid. Eventually, they called the Rev. Alexander Simpson, a native of Paisley, and at the time a licentiate of the Established church, but who joined the Relief presbytery, and was ordained by them, 27th Oct., 1763, to the pastorate of the newly formed church at Bellshill.†

As Bellshill was the first Relief church in the west, it does not seem that the line of demarcation between it and the Church of Scotland was at first very clearly understood. After Mr. Simpson's ordination, by the Relief presbytery, he assisted at the dispensation of the Lord's Supper, in Dr. Gillies's church, Glasgow, and preached and baptized children in Mr. Baine's, Paisley. And when he was libelled by the Established presbytery of Paisley, as one of their licentiates, for following divisive courses, “he alleged that neither he nor the presbytery of Relief taught any separating principles; that he was affording a temporary relief to a part of the parish of Bothwell who were still desirous to continue on the Establishment, and that he apprehended he was doing a service to the Establishment.” The Church of Scotland soon taught him, that in her estimation he was doing her no service, for he was declared “incapable of receiving a presentation or call, as a licentiate of the church, to any parish within the same.”‡

\* MS. statement by Hamilton, presbytery elder at the time.

† Previous to the erection of the Bellshill Relief church, a portion of the inhabitants of Old Monkland had separated themselves from the Rev. Mr. Park, whose case afterwards came before the Assembly, which retained him in his church, though he confessed his wife had a child to him before their lawful and regular marriage. They had applied to the Relief presbytery and received countenance, but on the erection of the Bellshill church, the Monkland people joined themselves to it.

‡ Minutes of Assembly, 1764.



It was remarkable, that he should have alleged, that the Relief taught no separating principles, when Boston had most explicitly renounced the judicatories of the church, and Gillespie was dispensing religious ordinances in spite of the sentence of deposition passed by the church upon him. Rebels surely are not subjects. The judgment of the Assembly having been given in the case of Simpson, no minister of the church has ever since fallen into the same mistake as Gillies and Baine; and acted as if the Establishment and the Relief were one body, or otherwise so closely associated that they could exchange services in preaching and dispensing the sacraments. It will soon appear that Mr. Simpson himself held such liberal sentiments on communion as were incompatible with strict Establishment principles. In the mean time, it is sufficient to state that he was a warm, able, evangelical preacher, who often in the pulpit wept, like his Saviour, over lost souls; and that he collected around him a numerous congregation, and contributed greatly to give a savour to the name of the Relief presbytery along the whole vale of the Clyde, from Tinto to the Mull of Kintyre. Bellshill was for many years a favourite preaching locality, where thousands annually assembled at the dispensation of the Lord's Supper, so long as tent preaching was kept up on those solemn occasions.

COLLEGE STREET.—One of the most important accessions hitherto made to the Relief presbytery, took place in 1765, when the first Relief church was constituted in Edinburgh. At the death of Dr. John Hyndman, of Lady Yester's church, one of the severest struggles took place which the iron law of patronage ever produced. The vacancy, on an intimation from London, was very speedily filled up by the magistrates issuing a presentation in favour of Dr. Drysdale, Kirkliston. He was not one of the popular candidates. The ministers and kirk session were highly incensed that they had not been consulted, as in former times, before the presentation was made out. Pamphlets were published in abundance. The public mind was wrought up to the highest degree of excitement. The point in dispute was, whether the council had the sole right, or only a joint power along with the ministers, of the city and general session to call and settle ministers in Edinburgh. The cause was first tried before the court of session, who found that the privilege belonged exclusively to the council, and this judgment, on an appeal, was, on the 13th March, 1764, confirmed by the House of Lords.

This decision, and the consequent settlement of Dr. Drysdale, gave great offence to the friends of religious liberty. Two new churches sprang out of it. Those who were favourable to the Church of Scotland, notwithstanding of her general law of patronage, sought relief in a Chapel of Ease, where they could obtain the choice of their own minister, and left others to struggle against the infliction of presentees as best they could. Another party took much more decided ground, and resolved that they would rid themselves of patronage and of all the evils of state connection. The views of church government held by Mr. Glas, had made considerable progress in Edinburgh. Not a few of the inhabitants were inoculated with his *Independent* opinions, though they did not carry their views so high as to refuse to co-operate as members in carrying forward a church upon moderate *presbyterian* principles unconnected with of the state.\* The balance vibrated between an application to the Secession or the Relief. Mr. William Dickson, dyer, having written Mr. Gillespie for counsel and advice in their present circumstances, the opportunity was not let slip. A long letter from Dunfermline, deprecating their proposed connection with the Seceders, and recommending very warmly a connection with the Relief, turned the scale, and secured the projected church to the Relief body, who had hitherto no meeting-house in the metropolis. As might have been expected, though with more temper than what was becoming even in a private letter, he ~~condemns~~ the Secession very strongly for giving up their first testimony, which admitted of communion with all the faithful; and charges them with establishing sinful terms of communion, in refusing to hold fellowship with all who will not adopt their peculiar standards and formularies. This conduct he denounces as contrary to the word of God, the 26th chapter of the Confession of Faith, and even to the Solemn League and Covenant, which was constructed (but how constructed!) to produce *uniformity* in the three kingdoms. In a spirit partaking not a little of the sectarian principles and practices which he

\* The author of three letters to Mr. Baine, yet to be noticed, in twitting him with leaving the Church of Scotland without a change of principles, says, p. 11, "Had you been of the sentiments of some, and as I hear of the most considerable of your congregation, who are truly of the Independent persuasion, and who, on that very account have declined the office of the eldership with you, and who, very consistently with these principles, have long been desirous of a meeting separate from the Establishment, I should not have blamed you."

would condemn, he says, "I dare not for a thousand worlds concur in Seceding principles and practices. My conscience would fly in my face, did I join in stated fellowship with a Seceding minister." Afterwards he paints in glowing colours, the advantages of the Relief plan, which takes ministers out of the Establishment, but which does not impregnate them with sectarian notions, and keeps up a healthful action and union among all the ministers of Christ and his devoted people. Gillespie longed for union among all the followers of Jesus. It was the turning point of his policy. "Bringing ministers out of the Established church in our way to congregations, is not weakening the church in general, nor the hands of faithful ministers in it in particular, for we have done nothing, I hope will be preserved from doing anything, to hinder union of all the Lord's servants' people. We want communion with the Lord's servants' people, wrestling against defections and corruptions in the Established church, are, and will be, every way, ever ready to be joined or embodied with them in obeying the laws of Christ; the more our number is increased, while we are preserved from a party spirit and practice, the more stands in way of declension in principle to stem it, the greater is the weight to draw on union, for want of which the land mourns."\*

Accordingly a meeting was speedily held in Edinburgh, and subscription papers were issued on the 15th January, 1765, "for having a minister settled amongst us *upon the plan well known* by that of the Presbytery of Relief." Robert Gillespie† of Clearburn, brother of the Rev. Mr. Gillespie, was the mainspring of the movement, and contributed most liberally towards the building of the church. The proposal no sooner got wing than it was vigorously opposed; and attempts were made to keep it, like Noah's raven, always in the air, and to weary it out by not allowing it a single spot of ground on which to rest its foot. A site for their church was denied them. Secretly, however, they bought the Bowling-green without Potterrow Port, held by Mr. Jamieson, in feu from Lady Nicholson; and, as he was a mason, induced him to make the sale by agreeing with him at the same time for the building of the church. This was paving the way with worldly prudence; and, the cause being well supported by men of wealth and

\* Revised Case, Smith against Galbraith, p. 59.

† By mistake, this person is, at page 126, called Thomas instead of Robert.

respectability, such as Messrs. Dickson, Govan, Dunsmure, Mowbray, Charles Sheriff of Leith, &c., the house was speedily completed, and opened on Sunday, 12th January, 1766, for public worship.

The election of the minister was proceeded in with considerable caution, and yet with as much freedom and openness as their circumstances would permit. The rule which they had adopted at their formation was, "That the calling of ministers to said meeting-house shall, for the first time, be in the major part of all contributors of 20s. to its erection; and, afterwards, by the majority of the communicants who shall ordinarily attend the ministry therein." Mr. Robert Gillespie, acting for the committee, had opened up a correspondence through Mr. Simpson of Bellshill, prior to October, 1765, with Mr. James Baine of the High Church of Paisley—"proposing to him, if a call to the ministry here on the plan of the presbytery of Relief would be acceptable to him; and from him he had got an answer as full and satisfactory as could be expected." "Mr. William Dickson, dyster," of his own accord, and countenanced by some of the subscribers, had also made a proposal to Mr. Cruden of Logie-Pert, "who had signified, not obscurely, his inclination to accept of the ministry among them, *provided the concurrence of the presbyteries of Edinburgh and Brechin be got to the settlement.*" This condition was fatal to his offer, for they would not "depart from their primary resolution of having a minister upon the plan of the Presbytery of Relief." The call, 30th October, turned out unanimously for Baine, and commissioners were sent to arrange the matter with him. His annual salary "was to be equal to an Edinburgh stipend;" and several of his most substantial callers were to give him a bond for the amount. Strenuous efforts were made by persons in Edinburgh to dissuade him from closing with the invitation, but he had weighed the matter too carefully to be driven from his purpose. By the 24th December, 1765, the whole matter was concluded on either side.

In ordinary cases the paper termed a **CALL** is a very unimportant thing, as there is a general model on which each is formed. It was different on the present occasion. The circumstances were peculiar. The denomination was in its infancy. Its principles were not very well known. As Mr. Baine was a man of good business talents, and wished that his flock should understand on



what principles he came among them, he, with the assistance of the commissioners, framed the wording of his own call, and afterwards, when he became clerk of court, it was the model call of the presbytery, and embodies the catholic principles on which the early Relief churches were founded. It was in the following terms :—

“ We, the underwritten inhabitants of the city of Edinburgh and its neighbourhood, having built a house for the public worship of God, not as separatists from the Protestant churches, or the worthy ministers and members of the Established church in our land with whom we can freely hold communion, being of one mind with us in the faith, worship, and institutions of Jesus Christ; but we have taken the above step to vindicate our Christian and most natural right to choose the pastor who is to labour amongst us in holy things, in opposition to the abuse of the power of patronage, the pernicious effects of which are so heavily felt in all corners, and particularly in this city. And partly that the truth and purity of the gospel may remain among us, and be transmitted to posterity. And being (many of us) destitute of a fixed gospel pastor with whom we can cordially join, and all of us deeply affected with the paucity of faithful ministers in the place, and being well-assured, from good information, and the experience of some of us, of the ministerial qualifications and of the suitableness to our capacities of the gifts of you, Mr. James Baine, minister of the gospel in Paisley, have agreed with great unanimity among ourselves, and the concurrence of the Rev. Presbytery of Relief, to call, as by these presents, in pursuance of, and in conformity to, our aforesaid declared principles, we do heartily call and invite you to undertake the office of a pastor among us, and the charge of our souls; and, hoping that you will find this our call (which has been carried on with so much unanimity and order) is a clear call from the Lord; we, upon your accepting of it, do sincerely promise you all dutiful respect and submission to your ministry in the Lord; and farther, we faithfully promise and oblige ourselves, each according to his ability, to afford you all necessary encouragement and subsistence suitable to your character and station as a minister of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our lawfully called pastor, so as you may attend upon and discharge the duties of your sacred function without distraction or anxiety, in witness whereof these pre-

sents, written upon stamped paper by A. S., are subscribed by us at,"\* &c., &c.

In this call, a very prominent place is given to the principles of free-communion; patronage is condemned; soundness in the faith is particularly sought after; and the support of the minister and religious ordinances is to be voluntary, and the result of Christian principle. Not a word is said about the power of the civil magistrate in religious matters, which was the palladium of the day with other parties for the success of religion; and the Relief church is spoken of as being of one mind with the Protestant churches and the Church of Scotland "in faith, worship, and the institutions of the Lord Jesus Christ;" but not a syllable about their harmonizing in civil enactments in support of religion.

It now became necessary that Mr. Baine should demit office in the Church of Scotland, and prepare for his induction into his new charge. There were many ties which bound him to the Establishment, and nothing but a very strong sense of duty could have induced him to take the step which he did. He was the son of the Rev. Mr. Baine, minister of Bonhill, Dumbartonshire, where he was born, 1710. His education commenced at the parish-school, and was completed at the university of Glasgow. In due time, he was licensed a preacher of the Established Church of Scotland, in which he had been reared, under the care of his parents. He soon afterwards became minister of the parish of Killern, which is well known in British history as the birth-place of Buchanan. In this sequestered district he spent several years of tranquil happiness, and took a deep interest in the spiritual welfare of his flock.

He allied himself to the liberal and evangelical side of the church, who were opposed to patronage, and who laboured assiduously to promote the revival of religion among the great bulk of the people. He was not only a neighbour, but a friend of the Rev. Mr. Robe of Kilsyth, in whose congregation "the extraordinary work" of the Spirit appeared about the year 1742. Accordingly, Mr. Baine wrote Mr. Robe in 1751,† a letter bearing witness to the work of grace in the hearts of those who had been converted in his parish, and lamenting that so few drops of the refreshing shower had reached his quarter.

\* MS. Minute-Book, written at the time, and lent me by a friend. From it all the above facts about College-street are taken.

† Robe's Narrative, p. 288.

His reputation as a preacher soon spread far beyond the retired spot to which his pulpit ministrations were principally confined. In 1756 he was translated to the High Church of Paisley. It was then a new erection. He entered upon the arduous duties of his important situation with a high degree of popularity, and continued during the whole period of his ministrations in that town to be greatly esteemed by a large and affectionate congregation. He was as popular when he left them as when he entered upon his charge.

Two matters, however, occurred during his pastorate in Paisley, which produced several opponents and somewhat soured his mind; but as they sprang from his liberal views, and his high ideas of the spirituality and independence of the church of Christ, they served to endear him the rather to his flock. As his church was newly built, he wished it formed really into a church with proper office-bearers, and not bundled up with a general session belonging to the borough; but though he prosecuted the matter, for a separate session for his own church, through all the church courts till it terminated in the General Assembly, he was ultimately foiled. The office of Clerk of the General Session soon after became vacant, and the magistrates claimed the appointment. Now the cloven foot began to appear. The different sessions must not only meet as one, but the clerk must be a nominee of the magistrates, that they might be privy to their business, and indirectly control them in the discharge of their duty, while inflicting the discipline of the church. Baine contended most strenuously that every court should elect its own clerk, and particularly a session. Unfortunately Dr. Wotherspoon, who was his colleague in the session, and who was in his general church politics as liberal as Baine, took the opposite side, threw his weight into the scale of the magistrates; and the session, led on by these two able and talented ministers, ranged themselves into two parties against each other. The whole community were enlisted in the dispute. It was first canvassed in the church courts, and afterwards litigated in the Court of Session. In both instances the decisions were against Baine, and in favour of the magistrates. Baine being a zealous defender of the liberty and independence of the church, could not brook such Erastian principles and practices, as the magistrates appointing the very session clerk, which is a court of conscience, and intermeddling and controlling the church in the smallest spiritual matters. He saw state influence now per-

vading the whole body of the Establishment from head to foot, lamented that it had become altogether corrupt, as a spiritual institution, and therefore he was prepared to leave it, and carry on his work as a minister where state influence would not be felt. The presence of the state, by its nominees in church courts, made him a dissenter.

He was also highly incensed at the ecclesiastical tyranny which deposed Gillespie, and which had afterwards manifested itself in various decisions. In tendering his resignation, therefore, to the Established presbytery, he took notice of the following facts,—that he had been denied a separate session to assist him in his parish; that the right of the session (to elect its own clerk) had been betrayed by those who should have defended it; and that, while he retained his principles of ministerial and Christian communion, and cherished a cordial regard to the constitution and interests of the Church of Scotland, yet he gave in the demission of his charge in the Church of Scotland, because, said he, “I abhor persecution in every form, and that abuse of church power of late, which, to me, appears *inconsistent with humanity, with the civil interests of the nation, and destructive of the ends of our office as ministers of Christ.*” It is scarcely possible to use stronger language than this. He felt that for him to continue any longer in connection with the Church of Scotland, and an abettor of her oppressive measures, was inconsistent with the ordinary principles of humanity; with citizenship in a free country; and that the very purposes for which the office of the ministry was instituted were in imminent peril, and therefore he gave up his former church connection.\*

His resignation was not properly received and adjudicated upon till the meeting of the Assembly in May. In the mean time his admission to the Relief church, Edinburgh, (now College-street,) was proceeded in. It took place on the 13th February, 1766, three days after he had resigned the High Church of Paisley. Mr. Gillespie introduced him to his new charge. His accession to the infant cause gained it a great accession of strength and respectability, for it was not without good reason that he was called, in his early days, from the sweetness of his voice and the excellency of his address, as a preacher, “The Swan of the West.”

\* His letter of resignation will be found in the Appendix.



Shortly after the settlement of Baine the half-yearly dispensation of the sacrament in Edinburgh came round, and, after preaching in his own church in the forenoon, he went over in the afternoon, at the head of his congregation, to the New Greyfriar's church, and joined in communion with the congregation of the Rev. Dr. Erskine. This fact has been matter of rather keen discussion as to the reasons of it, though, after all, it is a thing of no great moment. The uncharitable have attributed it to a factious spirit, wishing to test the tolerance of the church to the utmost; the admirers of catholic communion have attributed it to a desire on his part, in the very spirit of his Call, to evince a friendly disposition in church fellowship towards a worthy minister and his people, connected with the Established church; while others strip the matter of all mystery, by stating, that though his new church was in such a state as to be opened for public worship, it was not in such a condition as to admit of the dispensation of the sacrament of the Supper.\* In Mr. Baine's circumstances the step was not very remarkable. He was still a minister on the roll of the Establishment, for his demission had not yet been considered and judged of in the church courts. It was his avowed principle, as it is still of the Relief, to hold communion with all visible saints. And Whitefield, who had liberalized the spirit of Scotland, had taught his admirers, among whom were the early Relief Fathers, to join with other churches as God gave them opportunity, as it was the best means of preserving the visible unity of the church of Christ.

When the Assembly met in May, Baine's cause was brought up from the inferior judicatories. He was cited, compeared, and took his place at the bar. He was not a stricken deer. He knew his rights, and had courage also to defend them, though the prudent conduct of Boston in similar circumstances was rather to be preferred. The Assembly, led on by Dr. Robertson, were resolved to make short work with him. They took up his case on his letter of resignation, and his being *notour* a Relief minister. It was in vain that Baine demanded a libel, since they were going to condemn him for a fault, and pled that it must be instructed by some evidence, and not a mere report, that he was officiating in another church. They kept him to the point parenthetically stated in his letter of

\* Kay's Portraits, Article Baine, p. 86.

resignation—"the charge I have now accepted;" and on this clause they interrogated him, to make him his own accuser, and without farther proof tried, judged, and condemned him on the spot. They did not strip him of his ministerial character. This was left untouched. But they first declared him no minister of the Church of Scotland; secondly, declared him incapable of receiving or accepting of a presentation or call from any parish; and, thirdly, prohibited all the ministers of the Establishment to employ him or be employed by him. In one word, they cast him out of *their* church, and drew a line of excommunication around him, as if he had been infected with leprosy. All future intercourse between him and them was now cut off. This sentence produced a strong sensation in the country. It had the effect of exciting the warmest sympathy of his new congregation, and confirmed and rivetted them in their dissenting principles.

Mr. Baine was not a man to be borne down by ecclesiastical power, without making himself both heard and felt. He instantly prepared and published a review of the proceedings of the Assembly. In it he does not spare his opponents, while he expands and vindicates at large, his reasons for demitting his charge in the Establishment.\* It is an *exposé* of his principles, and throws much light upon the early history of the Relief church.

Taking the pamphlet of Baine, and reading it in connection with the answer to it by Philalethes, a considerable degree of light is let in upon his trial, and allusions to persons who figured

\* 'Memoirs of Modern Church Reformation, or the History of the General Assembly, 1766, and occasional Reflections upon the Proceedings of said Assembly, with a Brief Account and Vindication of the Presbytery of Relief, by James Baine, A.M., Minister of the Gospel at Edinburgh.' Edinburgh: 1766.

To these Memoirs, an Answer was published under the title of—'Observations on the Letters published by the Rev. Mr. James Baine, entitled, Memoirs of Modern Church Reformation, or the History of the General Assembly, 1766. In Three Letters.' Glasgow: 1767. Signed, PHILALETHES.—The Rev. Mr. Morren, in his Annals of the Assembly, seems to think, that as "Philalethes" is the usual signature of Walker of Dundonald, in the Scots Magazine, that the letters may be by him. He was the personal friend of Baine. We have heard, on what we consider better authority, the three letters ascribed to Randall, Stirling. They are not Walker's. Baine hints this, not obscurely in the Scots Magazine, 1767, p. 193, where he offers to discuss the matter with Philalethes, if he will give his name. Says he, "Let him then throw aside the mask, not put it upon *another*, or a friend who may be *tame* enough to submit to the imposition, and I am willing to correspond."

on the occasion are pretty well understood. It is proper that Baine should be allowed to speak for himself. A few extracts may be not uninteresting.

Speaking of his mode of trial without a libel, and of the grave charge brought against him, he says, with indignant severity, "I compeared, rather out of deference to the Assembly, than that I thought myself strictly bound to do so, or to give any sanction to proceedings so summary and irregular. But finding that, from penury of articles and evidence, they were to make me my own accuser, and evidence against myself, I said, that instead of a Protestant Assembly, I began to breathe, I thought, in the air of an inquisition; and if such was their form of process, they would forgive me to insist upon the chief and most natural privilege of every man, and every British subject in particular, viz., to give me a libel in form, and time to make my defence: that as yet I saw nothing faulty alleged, if it was not in that expression in the summons, 'to answer for giving up my ministerial charge,' in which, I presumed, they could find nothing criminal; for often had ministers resigned their charge upon different accounts, and justifiable; nay, some have given it up for the more entertaining and elegant employ of the stage, who were not called in question, or found delinquents."\* The biting sarcasm of the allusion to some giving up their ministerial charge for "the elegant employ of the stage," can only be appreciated, when it is known, that Home, the author of Douglas, did this, and that he was sitting in court as an honourable elder, to aid Dr. Robertson in punishing Baine, as he had assisted him as his faithful Ajax in former times, when a minister, in deposing Gillespie.

From the second part of "the sentence of the Assembly," declaring him incapable of accepting a call on the Establishment, he did not shrink. He was prepared for it as a Relief minister, only they should have had legal evidence that he was so. "I said, that if the Assembly had had proper evidence, that I was now a member of the Presbytery of Relief, in that case I had no objection to this part of the sentence, viz. to be incapable of a presentation or call to a charge upon the Establishment. But the misfortune is, this sentence in every branch has no legs to support it. I say it again, there was no proper evidence in court, that I was a member of the Presbytery of Relief, unless you go

into the very singular opinion of a learned civilian, that notoriety was in place of proof, (i. e.) the common talk without doors is sufficient to condemn.”\*

By the third part of the sentence Mr. Baine was “intercommunicated;” and against this he lifted his voice, as being antichristian, and such as no church court was warranted to pronounce against one whom they still considered a Christian.

“The other part of the sentence, ‘discharging ministerial communion, to employ or be employed by me, till some future Assembly think proper to take it off.’ Against this judgment I could not but remonstrate with concern, as alike impolitical and unchristian. And I am still of opinion, that though all that was alleged had been properly verified, such a sentence is greatly disproportioned to the fault, and cannot be reconciled to the spirit and laws of the New Testament. There the terms of Christian and ministerial communion are unchangeably fixed, and by the highest authority, viz. oneness in the uncorrupted faith and worship of Christ, in hope and holy practice. Where his ministers and disciples are united in these, they are indispensably bound to love, and to public fellowship with one another in acts of worship and spiritual privileges, and *no posterior human establishments* can destroy that sacred bond, or make it a rope of sand.”†

It thus comes clearly out that he considered Establishments of religion “human,” and posterior to the New Testament canon, and that they could not annul the terms of ministerial and Christian communion which were laid down in the sacred volume.

This was the only part of the sentence on which the Assembly divided. Dr. Robertson pressed the matter with all his influence and authority, and declared “that, without such censure, the very being of the Establishment could not be preserved.” To this Baine, as a Relief minister, makes the pungent reply:—

“It was a pity that no one asked the reverend gentleman, what he understood by the Establishment? The things that can properly be called so, are the faith, the judicatories, the livings established by law. The Presbytery of Relief, I hope, do no hurt to the first of these; nor make they any pretensions to the other two. What then can give such an alarm? Is it that that presbytery preaches the faith, which others too have subscribed, and are bound to maintain? Or is it, that the Presbytery of

\* Page 10.

† P. 11.



Relief stand up for our ancient Established church-constitution, so shamefully changed from the limited into the arbitrary; from a truly Christian, British model, into a despotic, French mould? This, Sir, some people tell you is the secret; and therefore the old scarecrow must be raised from the dead, to affright the weak, as if the whole fabric were coming down on them, and to keep the crafty in countenance.”\*

Dr. Robertson had also dwelt upon the fact, “as a great aggravation of his offence, that he was admitted to his charge by a man whom a former Assembly had deposed from the ministry in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” “If prudence,” says Baine, “had been consulted, she would have said, Let the ashes of this noisome affair lie for ever in the bottom of oblivion and contempt. Though that harsh unconstitutional sentence was pronounced in the ever-blessed name of our exalted Lord, does the reverend doctor, when on his knees, really think that it is bound in heaven? With me, it was a very agreeable circumstance to be admitted by the Reverend Mr. Gillespie: it gave me an opportunity of exemplifying, in a public manner, a favourite maxim in my letter to the presbytery of Paisley, viz., that I abhor persecution in every form; and Mr. Gillespie’s deposition was of that kind. The principles which led to it, will justify all the severities with which our dissenting brethren were treated under reigns stained with oppression and blood.”†

In defending the step which he had taken, and in giving a short account of the Relief Presbytery, Mr. Baine goes at once for arguments to what was notorious:—“Scandals,” says he, “are open and flagrant. More in number, I suspect, in these ten or twelve years past, than in sixty preceding ones. And if the most probable source of all this mischief be the abuse of the law of patronage, the violent stretch and severity of church-power and Assembly-decisions to enforce it; are they the enemies of God, their king, or country, who dislike and oppose such measures, or would prevent the wretched havock made by them of every valuable interest in our land? I hope not, Sir, nor do I see any such effectual expedient and preventive under heaven, as the plan of the Presbytery of Relief. Upon this view of the whole matter, I am entirely satisfied with my conduct; and wonder greatly that some worthy ministers of the Establishment have not taken the

same course. Their principles, if I mistake not, lead them to it: they see, with great concern, the fatal growth of ignorance, gross errors, profanity overflowing the land: they see multitudes of 'poor and needy' earnestly seeking for water and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst (the Lord hear them); for such worthy ministers cannot help these congregations and corners in their extremity, while on the Establishment, as when off of it. And from some late proceedings it is obvious enough, that no manner of redress is to be expected from the chief administrators in it.

"You are asked, it seems, by some people in your corner, what is this Presbytery of Relief? what are their principles and constitution? Look, Sir, what the Church of Scotland was sixty or seventy years ago; find out this from her own creeds and confessions, her canons, public acts, and authentic records, and, excepting some privileges purely civil, and derived from law alone, you have the full portrait of that presbytery; in doctrinal articles, ordinances of divine worship, in principles of government, and Christian comprehensive communion, the same. They must go to other pulpits than those of that presbytery, who would be entertained and edified by Arian or Pelagian tenets; who would hear the bold unscriptural assertions and criticisms of Dr. Taylor maintained, the doctrine of original sin treated as original jargon, the present purity and powers of human nature extolled to the skies, and the wonders it can work in its own salvation, whilst the Redeemer and his most Holy Spirit are allowed a very small share of the honour. If our General Assemblies go on, by mere authority, to cram down upon people ministers whom they look upon as the nuisance of the country, and their sorest enemy; is there no such thing to be feared, as that these people may fall into hands weak or designing, who may mislead them, both in their principles of religion and loyalty? In such a disturbed state of the church, is there no danger from the most artful, restless spirit of a society, now annihilated in France, but no doubt at work in our land, and particularly the great cities of it? Whilst our country is in this distracted situation, and measures steadily going on, which manifestly inflame it more and more; is the Presbytery of Relief so highly criminal to send forth pastors, who will be received with open arms, from whose ministry their people may imbibe a sound belief and sober morals, love to our excellent civil constitution, and cordial loyalty to the most

illustrious head of it? The impartial world, I trust, will think more favourably of them, and cease from reproach, till they find *that*, in the spirit and way of the presbytery, which may justly denominate them sectaries in religion, or the incendiaries of their native country." \*

There is one sentiment pervading many of these extracts, which appears at first sight very much at variance with present notions. The Relief Presbytery are represented as contending for the old constitution of the Church of Scotland, sixty or seventy years before the time when he wrote. He is careful, however, to distinguish the Presbytery of Relief from the Church of Scotland in its civil constitution. It was the same in its faith, but not in its judicatories or livings established by law. To these it made "no pretensions." It renounced "all the privileges of the Church of Scotland purely civil, and derived from law alone." It was thus entirely removed from what he calls "human establishments posterior to the laws of the New Testament." The "Presbytery of Relief," said he, "stand up for our ancient Established church-constitution, so shamefully changed from the *limited* into the *arbitrary*; from a truly Christian, British model, into a despotic French mould." Like Gillespie, he contended for the old liberty enjoyed by ministers and presbyteries, when the state, in practice at least, allowed the church; and the church allowed individual clergymen, to do in every thing very much what they chose. He no doubt also had his eye fixed upon what, sixty or seventy years before, was the mode of electing ministers; for the law of patronage was then, in a great measure, in abeyance, and the popular form of church appointments, enacted by William and Mary, was then in operation. Queen Anne's patronage act was not then in existence.

Assuredly, however, in many particulars, the old Church of Scotland was very intolerant; and while its ministers all combined to resist the state, and claimed a vast deal of liberty whenever the war was in that direction; yet they often wielded the iron rod of discipline against each other with a crushing, rather than with a reforming power. Accordingly, *Philaethes* takes advantage of this view of the matter, and takes Baine sharply to task for arguing in favour of the old constitution of the Church of Scotland, as if it had been one of liberty. He tells him that the doctrine

of 'Toleration,' for which he was contending, was not even then recognised by the church, and instead of keeping *him* in communion, as he pleads, they would have deposed him at once. He asks Baine, "Did they (the ministers of the old Church of Scotland) think the *toleration* a privilege? They struggled against it with all their might, as what they knew must be productive of licentiousness and separation. Was their communion comprehensive? Turn to their records, and see them not cutting off from the ministerial communion only, but deposing every minister that in the least separated from them; and in later times, thirty and forty years ago, did not the remains of that old generation depose Messrs. Glas and Archibald! Is not your representation here deceitful? Our fathers, sixty or seventy years ago, were not of your principles, nor would have acted your part."\*

While Baine was worshipping the shades of bygone times, justly as to some particulars, and as to others, perhaps, unjustly, he had yet shot far ahead, as we shall yet see, of their notions as to restricted communion, and the power of the magistrate in religious matters, and even held those enlightened and scriptural notions which were soon to make way in Scotland. The good effects of Baine's settlement in Edinburgh speedily appeared in checking the power of patronage and of priestly domination. A vacancy by the death of Dr. Kay taking place at the time in one of the city churches, the magistrates did not even venture to issue a presentation, but allowed the legal term to elapse, and thus suffered the election to fall into the hands of the general session and people. Addresses were sent up forthwith from various public bodies, expressing to the magistrates, "with becoming gratitude, the just sense they had of their mild and prudent administration of ecclesiastical concerns;" whereas, if the truth had been told, the addresses should have been laid at the feet of the managers of the College-street congregation. These public-spirited men had shown the lieges how they might practically redress their grievances.

CAMPBELTON.—There are many things which invest the rise of the Relief congregation of Campbelton with deep interest. It was organized among a people who took refuge in Kintyre during the darkest period of Scotch ecclesiastical history; and who, after being forced out of the Establishment by the most

\* Observations, p. 40.



oppressive treatment, were compelled, at great expense, to defend the very place of worship which they had built from being clutched by the Church of Scotland.

Campbelton of Kintyre is situated in the county of Argyle. Gaelic is the native language of the district. The inhabitants of the town, however, and of the greater part of the adjacent country, stretching away towards Southend, were originally from the Lowlands, speak the English language, and observe the manners and customs of the west country people. Some of their progenitors were invited thither by the noble Marquis of Argyle, so early as 1640, and long enjoyed no small share of his favour and fatherly protection.

Argyle having declared himself on the side of the Covenanters in the Glasgow Assembly, 1638, instantly set about raising an army for their defence. Many of the Covenanters of Ayrshire resorted to his standard. The MacDonalds and Montrose, in 1646, having swept Kintyre,—giving many of the inhabitants to the sword and devouring flames, were in their turn checked, turned back, and destroyed by Argyle; hundreds of them were slaughtered, or thrown from the castle of Dunaverty into the sea. So completely were the estates of Argyle wasted by the scourge of war, that a sum of money was voted by the estates of the nation for the support of himself and family; and a collection was ordered throughout all the churches of Scotland for the relief of his plundered people. Kintyre was left a desert. Its few inhabitants became the prey of a fearful pestilence, which followed in the train of all their other calamities. In this howling land of death where a smoking chimney was scarcely to be seen, the Lowlanders, who had joined the standard of Argyle, were encouraged after the war to settle. Others came from the opposite mainland, and bringing with them their servants and dependants, the whole of Kintyre, which admitted of being ploughed and cultivated like Ayrshire, was speedily occupied by a thriving colony of pious and industrious inhabitants. It became a kind of Goshen, where the persecuted Covenanters, during the religious wars which followed, were often constrained to settle; and where they enjoyed the unspeakable blessing of privately worshipping God according to the dictates of their conscience, without the dread of troopers, fines, imprisonment, and death.

Amidst all these advantageous circumstances their happiness was embittered by the want of a gospel-ministry, and their un-

easiness increased as their children grew up around them. Although the gospel was preached in the country, it was in a language not understood by them. This evil, they thought, might be remedied by an application for a minister to preach and dispense to them religious ordinances. Accordingly, an application was made to the proper quarter, and "a minister was appointed to preach to them in an old thatched house in Campbelton, which house was kept in repair solely at the congregation's expense; and the stipend was also paid by them."\*

Their first minister was Mr. Edward Keith. His father was sheriff of Montrose, and a malignant or favourer of Prelacy. He himself, however, was a Covenanter. He was a pupil and convert of "the rair Samuel Rutherfoord;"† and on his recommendation he was settled minister of the Lowland congregation, Campbelton, where, notwithstanding the many attempts which were made to turn him aside, and win him back to the Prelatic party, he continued faithful unto the last. He died in 1682, and left behind him the reputation of being an excellent minister.

He was succeeded by Mr. James Boes. "As the church was kept in repair and the stipend paid by the congregation, they were allowed to choose a minister for themselves."‡ Privilege and support went hand in hand. In an evil day, however, he, with the design of relieving them of part of their burdens, advised them to apply to the commissioners for the planting of kirks for a stipend out of the bishop's teinds of Argyle, not then occupied by any incumbent. Their application was successful. They touched the money of the state as a church, and from that moment they lost their liberty. In seeking temporal relief they forged a chain which was wound round them, link after link, till it became intolerable; and at last, by one noble effort, they burst it into a thousand pieces and regained their freedom. They struck the blow and their shackles fell.

Mr. Boes was a minister of genuine piety,—of burning zeal,—sound in the faith, and of a benevolent and truly Christian spirit. From him they learned the principles of catholic communion to which they afterwards firmly clung; and this, in a great measure, determined their future connection with the Relief. He sent

\* Minute Book of the Relief Congregation.

† Wodrow's History, vol. iv., p. 525. Appendix, Boes' Letter.

‡ Campbelton Minute Book.

several communications, to the "Weekly History" of the work of conversion going on at Muthil, Kilsyth, Cambuslang, 1742, and in these he very strongly condemns the close communion principles of the Seceders, and advocates the free-communion principles of Robe and his friends. "I do humbly judge," says he, "that this work is the most practical and palpable convincing refutation of those who would exclude all from their communion who would not accede to their Act and Testimony." And afterwards, referring to the Act of the Associate Presbytery condemnatory of the Cambuslang revival, he breaks forth—"That pens, tongues, heads, hearts, and hands of profane Atheists and Deists should employ obloquies and detractions is no surprise; but I am sorry that — and others should so employ their pens as to endeavour to blacken the Lord's work, or cast water upon the Lord's fire, which I hope, notwithstanding all the engines of hell, will still burn hotter, shine clearer, and spread farther. The sweet work bears its own testimony and self-evidence in turning sinners from sin to God, from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. To call this *delusion* and *devilism*, is to turn heaven to hell, and *vice versa*."\* The influence which sentiments like these afterwards had upon the people in Campbelton when they came to choose their religious connection as Dissenters, was very great.

In 1749, he was removed from them full of years, and leaving behind him the well-earned reputation of having been an able, useful, and affectionate minister. His grave was scarcely closed when they felt, to their bitter experience, that their peace and happiness were fled. Their church being now supported out of the teinds of Argyle, the Duke claimed the patronage thereof, and soon gave them to understand that he would present a minister. This came upon them like a thunder storm. They never had dreamed that, by placing themselves on the Establishment for support, they had thereby denuded themselves of their Christian privilege of choosing their own pastor. These two things, however, are connected like cause and effect. Petition followed upon petition, but the Duke of Argyle, who is better known by his previous title, Archibald, Earl of Isla, who had all the patronage of Scotland at his disposal, and who had been the prime mover in the ecclesiastical domination that led to

\* Weekly History, paper 51.

the deposition of Gillespie, treated their petitions with dignified silence, and "granted a presentation to Mr. John M'Alpine of Arrochar, without in the least consulting the congregation." In spite of all their remonstrances he was intruded among them, and several of those who had opposed him most strenuously, "were as turbulent members of society *turned out of their farms*; all which the people bore with the greatest patience, hoping that some time or other things would turn out more favourably for them."\*

Mr. M'Alpine rendered himself still more obnoxious to his congregation, by being a party to an act passed in 1754 by the synod of Argyle, "enjoining that in all time coming there should be no sermons preached on the Saturday before the dispensation of the Lord's Supper, or the Monday after, and that, if any minister was refractory, or followed in this matter divisive courses, he was to be proceeded against according to the laws of the church." The lowland congregation protested against this act to the Assembly, which, after hearing parties, sanctioned the act itself, but not the ecclesiastical censures with which it was enforced. When the season arrived for dispensing the Lord's Supper in the lowland church, Mr. M'Alpine kept close to the curtailed services of the synod, notwithstanding of the earnest remonstrances of his people. The consequences were that his session would not officiate, the people would not participate, and the ordinance was not dispensed. This state of things led to the production of highly exasperated feelings, and eventually to bitter recriminations. The minister had the pulpit to himself for abuse upon Sabbath, but the elders, when met in session, did not fail to tell him of their grievances and wrongs. To bear down his elders, Mr. M'Alpine and his brethren, by a stroke of dexterous policy, got the lowland and highland churches collegiated, and then both sessions being united, and the highland one being the more numerous, and taking part with M'Alpine, who was, like themselves, a Gael, every thing was carried as M'Alpine chose. He now managed to get elders to assist at the communion; but for three years not more than seventeen partook of the ordinance of the Supper out of a communion-roll of 700.†

To thwart the people still farther, and compel them to submit to the laws of a dominant church, Mr. M'Alpine made them feel

\* Minute Book.

† Scots Magazine. Assembly Minutes, 1762.



that their church property was not their own, since they had touched a national provision for the support of religion. They had purchased, and hitherto kept in repair, the manse for their minister. As they stickled in the present state of acrimonious warfare to repair it according to his wish, he instantly applied to the presbytery, who grasped at the appeal, got the heritors to rebuild it, and thus stripped the people of their property, though they came forward when they saw the matter going to an extremity, and promised to be at all the expense. They were not permitted. They were now fleeced and peeled by the arm of ecclesiastical law, and the manse which they had reared passed into the hands of the heritors. The recollection of their peaceful days with Boes, and their sincere desire to live at peace with their minister, greatly aggravated their sore disappointments. The presbytery of Kintyre made their lives bitter with hard bondage.

A rupture very unexpectedly took place between Mr. M'Alpine and Mr. Stewart, the highland minister, who had secretly pushed on many of the violent measures. When Mr. M'Alpine was left to himself, he soon saw the impropriety of contending with his people, as every day the breach was becoming wider; and therefore he came to a compromise with them—they agreeing to drop the sermon on Monday, and he promising them a preparation sermon on Saturday. By obtaining this little boon, and the assurance at the same time of the affection of their minister, the whole congregation with one consent joyfully returned to church fellowship, and, over the wine cup of the Saviour's love, pastor and people pledged to each other their mutual affection.

In the eyes of the synod of Argyle, however, this conduct on the part of M'Alpine was a grave offence, as it was breaking a synodical law. He and Mr. Campbell of Southend, who had entered into the same amicable arrangement with his church, many of whom also were the descendants of lowlanders, were brought to the bar of the incensed synod, tried, convicted, and ordered to discontinue the sermon on Saturday. Having protested and appealed to the Assembly, the cause came to be adjudged in 1762. Messrs. M'Alpine and Campbell represented to the Assembly that their usefulness as ministers was gone if they attempted to act according to the injunction of the synod, while, at the same time, they bore most ample testimony

to the Christian conduct of their people, and that they ought to be indulged. "In justice to our people," said both the appellants, "we must say, that they are religious, regular, and well-disposed, insomuch that there are few or none within our parishes that do not regularly keep up the worship of God in their families, and take care to have their children educated in the principles of our reformed religion."\* The Assembly, after hearing parties, "allowed them to have sermon before the sacrament, as they shall see it for the interests of religion and the ends of edification." "The news of Mr. M'Alpine's success at the Assembly, spread joy throughout the congregation, and enlivened their decayed hopes. But, alas! how short-lived was their joy! Immediately upon the news of Mr. M'Alpine's success, they had an account of his death. It pleased God to take him hence while he was attending the Assembly."†

The lowland Campbelton church sincerely lamented the death of their minister, as they had for some time been fully reconciled to each other. Fearing that fresh troubles might be in store for them, they made an early application to John, Duke of Argyle, their legal patron, earnestly "begging that he would have so much regard for the peace of the country, and the interests of religion, that he would not thrust a man upon them contrary to their inclination."‡ But no answer was made to their petition, nor had a second one any better success. Others were busy at work in securing the presentation for a favourite protégé; and it was arranged, that the person of all others whom the congregation most disliked should be set over them. The highland minister, Mr. Stewart, who was greatly obnoxious to the lowland church, managed, through family influence with Argyle, to get his own son-in-law, Mr. Robertson, presented to the charge. 'Wolf,' 'wolf,' was the universal cry. The whole congregation were strongly inimical to him as their minister, except three, and one of these was the Duke's chamberlain. He was coming out of a family which they considered as their rank oppressors. They complained of him as being proud and supercilious—not regularly educated, and licensed "to serve a turn" in assisting his father-in-law—as being altogether unqualified for the charge, and as being universally disagreeable to the people. A commission was sent to London, for the ex-

\* Scots Magazine. Assembly proceedings, 1762.

† Campbelton Minute Book.

‡ Minute Book.

press purpose of getting the presentation withdrawn, and making his Grace aware of their condition. Another was sent to Edinburgh, at the meeting of Assembly, to see if anything could be done for them. All the commissioners came back as they went, and got nothing but fair speeches, coupled with an assurance that the settlement must proceed. Such was the oppression which they had brought upon themselves, by receiving state-pay for their minister, and it was sufficient to make wise men mad, but they could obtain within the church no relief. The settlement took place, and Mr. Robertson, as if infatuated, not only dropt the sermon on the Saturday, but took measures to have the seats of the church which the people had built allocated among the heritors. There is a point beyond which oppression cannot go, and the lowland congregation in Campbelton had now reached it. This scheme to get the church divided among the heritors, and to make the people sit as serfs on seats which they had themselves fitted up, entirely failed, for the sheriff refused to sanction this kind of wholesale ecclesiastical robbery; but the people could not brook the nefarious attempt to strip them of their property, and turn them out of their own church. The plan of the minister was probably to bring the church under ecclesiastical parochial law, that he might get it rebuilt or repaired by a vote of the presbytery. In their righteous indignation the people took advantage of the hint to quit, and in one body *left their seats indeed*, and walked out of the Establishment.

“Had they not,” as they say in their Minute Book, “a loud call to leave the church of which Mr. Robertson was the minister, and come out from under the inspection of clergy who, in all these violent measures, supported him and stood his friend; clergy unsound, and corrupters of the faith; indolent and unfaithful; who, instead of feeding, rather starve and scatter their flocks. Pastors covetous, ambitious, worldly, being more concerned to dwell at ease and advance their fortune, than to advance the interest of the Redeemer’s kingdom, or the good of immortal souls under their charge! Yes, a loud call they had, and they did obey it, being unable to bear any longer with such violence and oppression, with the want of the gospel and its holy ordinances, which were more precious to them than thousands of gold and silver.

“From this it will appear that the people had reasons suffi-

ciently strong for leaving the Establishment, they,—having for nearly the space of twenty years struggled for the gospel in vain, and having been at a vast expense by their different protests, appeals, and applications, and all to no purpose,—unanimously resolved to contend no longer in this way, but to build a church of their own, and call a minister who should take charge of their souls, and feed them with food convenient for them, and who should have no connection with the clergy of the country.

“A separation being agreed on, they, in the beginning of 1766, opened a subscription for a meeting-house, and in a short time a large sum (£1,451 18s.) was subscribed for it. The subscribers having all met together to consult what was proper to be done, did unanimously agree to choose twelve or thirteen persons of their number to carry on the said work. Having done this much, they gave orders for cutting some stones in the common quarry; but here they were stopped by the Duke’s chamberlain, saying; no stones would be allowed them out of that quarry to build a meeting-house. They soon saw that they were to meet with opposition from all quarters, but they were determined not to succumb but to brave it out, hoping that as it was the Lord’s work, he would support them and open another door to them; and, indeed, it was with them as anciently with the children of Israel, the more they were oppressed, the more they flourished in their future undertakings. Being stopped here, they opened a quarry within the sea-mark about three miles from Campbelton, but here they were also stopped by the chamberlain, who alleged that they were spoiling the grass by carrying their stones over it. Being stopped from cutting stones, they applied to Mr. Campbell of Kildalloig, for liberty to cut what stones they wanted in the island Davar (which lies in the mouth of Campbelton Loch): he granted their request for four pounds sterling. But, no sooner was this known, than Kildalloig was applied to by Mr. Robertson’s friends to stop them—but he could not do this, as he had made a positive bargain with them; however, he was so far prevailed with, as to stop them from carrying in horses to the island to drag the stones down to the shore, as this had not been expressly mentioned in their bargain. This was a very great hardship, and put them to the necessity of carrying the stones on barrows, and on their backs to the shore from the quarry. This was vastly difficult as well as tedious, and greatly retarded the work; upon this they applied



again to Kildalloig, for liberty to carry horses into the Island to drag the stones, but this he would not agree to unless they would give him four pounds sterling, which they were obliged to give.

“ They went to the trench and took some sand from thence. But no sooner had this reached the chamberlain’s ears, than he stopped them from carrying any more. This distressed them greatly, as the work was almost at a stand for the want of this article, and they knew not what hand to turn to. But they were not long in suspense: they got a vessel ready with all expedition, and sent her up to Ardnacross shore, and brought a cargo of sand, which relieved them at the time.

“ The gentleman to whom this sand belonged lived in Islay, to whom Mr. Robertson’s friends immediately wrote, telling him that the people who were building the new church had abused his ground by carrying sand from Ardnacross shore, and desired him immediately to stop them. They thought that if they could bring him over to their way of thinking, they would put an effectual stop to the building; but he, upon the receipt of their letter, and contrary to their expectations, wrote to the managers, granting liberty to take whatever they needed, only desiring them to satisfy his tenants for any hurt which might be done them. This was a piece of kindness neither asked nor expected.

“ The clergy in the country seeing the work near a close, and fearing that, if the people got a faithful minister, they would be affronted, or spurred on, contrary to their inclination, to a more faithful discharge of their office, applied to the managers of the society, to have their new kirk made a chapel-of-ease, promising all the assistance in their power, and to ordain any man they should choose; but their offers of friendship were rejected with disdain—they were too well known to be believed in their fair pretensions; the congregation well knew that the friendship the clergy had for them was but small, and were firmly resolved to have a minister who should not be under their inspection and influence.

“ The Antiburghers in the Low Country, hearing of the disturbances in Campbelton, and being ready to compass sea and land to make proselytes, sent over some of their party to preach with a view to gain the people to their party, but they got no countenance, as neither their principles nor terms of communion were agreeable to the people of Campbelton.

“ After mature deliberation, they agreed to join the Presby-

tery of Relief, and accordingly wrote to them for counsel and direction.”\*

The circumstance of the people of Campbelton disliking the terms of communion in the Secession, and preferring the more liberal terms of the Relief church, is easily accounted for, when the fact is recollected that Mr. Boes, whose memory was dear to them, and whose opinions were much revered, had openly taught among them liberal and scriptural terms of communion. He had testified against the Secession as being too narrow and sectarian, at a time when he never dreamed that his people would be called upon to choose between them and another body of dissenters. The moving cause is often far back in the chain of events.

As evidences of the alacrity, diligence, and indomitable perseverance with which they carried on their undertaking, a committee was sent to the Low country to collect subscriptions to aid them in carrying on their struggle. A vessel was *chartered* and sent to Norway for timber. Men, women, and children, carried stones or sand; and in the course of eighteen months they reared one of the most substantial churches in Scotland, capable of containing 1,600 worshippers. The object of their choice, Mr. James Pinkerton, saw it his duty to accept of their call; and on the 16th of July, 1767, he was ordained among them by the Presbytery of Relief. Affectionate, urbane, and ministerial in his deportment, he presided over his congregation till 1804, beloved by his people, and respected by those who had been the bitterest enemies of the infant cause. By kindness he charmed the serpents who at first would fain have stung him and his people to death. “A soft answer turneth away wrath.”

GLASGOW RELIEF CHURCH.—The rise of the Relief interest in Glasgow began with great promise, though it was soon somewhat blighted by very untoward events. In the year 1761, the Wynd church was rebuilt. Its minister, Dr. Craig, having been previously translated to St. Andrew’s church, the magistrates began to take steps for providing it with a minister, who was to rank as the seventh minister of the town. The sessions naturally expected that the ancient form of election, known by the name of the model 1721, would be followed, which allowed the session of the particular congregation first to nominate their nominee, who was afterwards presented to the general session, town-council, and

\* Preface of Campbelton Minute Book.

congregation successively; and then, if agreeable to all of them, the council and general session, under the sanction of the presbytery, gave him a CALL. This plan had been observed during forty years. It left the patronage, in a great measure, in the hands of ministers and elders. The council, however, were resolved to exercise their own legal rights as patrons, and not to be controlled by any ecclesiastical body.

For this purpose they applied "to the Lords of plantation" for a declaration of their right of patronage to the Wynd church. The corporations and sessions and ministers most strenuously opposed them both in the civil and ecclesiastical courts; but the law of the land was vindicated, and the patronage was declared to lie in the council, which they could not of right give away to other parties. Such legal grasping at church power excited great indignation among the ecclesiastical functionaries and the citizens at large. To smooth the way for the exercise of their legal rights, the magistrates gave out that they would not exercise their right of patronage like other patrons, but still consult as formerly with the ministers and committees of session. They kept their promise so far, that they did mention to them their first presentee; and a second one likewise; but the clergy and the elders not acquiescing in their choice, the magistrates and council took the matter entirely into their own hands, [and presented Mr. Bannatyne of Craigie to the vacant charge. He was of the moderate side of the church, and was inducted 18th October, 1764. The religious public were in flames. The whole members of the Wynd church session resigned their offices. The resignation taking place only three weeks before the celebration of the Lord's Supper, placed the magistrates and new minister in an awkward predicament. Such was the provost's perplexity on the occasion, that he found it necessary "to invite the ministers of the city to a friendly glass of wine to devise a plan for procuring elders at the ensuing Sacrament." \*

The people had taken their stand, and formed themselves into a society for the purpose of erecting a Relief church, in which they would be free from all civil interference. On 12th November, 1764, they held a meeting in the Barony church for the purpose of electing office-bearers, and carrying out their design.

\* Cleland's Annals.

Bailie James Smith was elected preses, and eleven of a committee were chosen to act along with him, and carry on the undertaking. They speedily reared a Relief church (now the chapel-of-ease, Albion-street). It contained about 1,800 sittings, which shows the number that must have at the time dissented from the Establishment and joined the standard of the Relief. When it was building, a kind of underhand scheme was proposed by a leading man to Mr. Taylor, Wesleyan minister, who was in Glasgow, to have him inducted into it; but the plan was given up before it came to a vote of the society.\*

Though the subscriptions were raised expressly for a Relief church, yet there were still a few that wished it made a chapel-of-ease; and, to keep as near to the Established church as possible with safety, to be free of patronage. After consulting lawyers, they were assured that there could be no permanent safety without betaking themselves to the Presbytery of Relief. Accordingly, at their annual meeting in 1765, the vote was put whether they should make application to the Relief Presbytery according to the preamble of their subscriptions, or convert their meeting-house into a chapel-of-ease. The whole congregation, except seven or eight, voted for its being a Relief church. They applied in the spring to the Relief Presbytery; but the application not being regarded as sufficiently formal and definite, its admission was deferred. A fresh application through Mr. Gillespie was made in June, when it was formally received. The house was opened on 17th August, 1766, by the Rev. Mr. Baine of Edinburgh. He preached from 1 Tim. iii. 15. The crowd was immense. Everything augured well; but still the main thing was awanting—an able, faithful, and acceptable minister to take the pastoral charge of the congregation.

The person on whom their affections were fixed was Mr. Boston of Jedburgh. He had many ties, however, binding him to his present charge. His constitution also had been somewhat impaired by affliction during the winter, and though he had recruited considerably, he had not regained his former vigour. After asking time repeatedly to consider of the matter, he, in the month of September, wrote them that he was heartily sorry for the distress he would inflict upon them, and the trouble he had put them to; “but, after the most serious and mature delibera-

\* Life of Thomas Taylor, p. 32. York. 1780.



tion, I cannot find it bound as duty on my conscience before God to come to Glasgow. Could I have found this, I would have feared no labours, nor been controlled by any authority; but that not being the case, I am obliged to stop short."

This was a sad stroke. The Relief cause was still in its infancy. There were but few ministers to select from; and out of that few, fewer still were qualified to take the superintendence of a large and respectable church in Glasgow. Mr. Gillespie endeavoured to direct their attention to Mr. Monteith, a presbyterian dissenter in Berwick-on-Tweed; and he did come and officiate among them as a candidate, and gave considerable satisfaction. The impression he produced, however, was not very decided. Still the hearts of not a few of them turned towards Mr. Boston, and, through the medium of Mr. Simpson, Bellshill, his son-in-law, a communication was opened up afresh with him on the terms that he should be called as the pastor of the Glasgow church; and his son, Michael, who was then a dissenting minister in England, should be associated with him as his assistant and successor. So eager were his party to carry their project of a joint pastorate between father and son, that Boston, labouring under a return of his former disorder, was induced to travel by a "wheeled vehicle," as he could not ride, and to come to Glasgow and preach and consult with his friends. As might have been expected, the congregation shrunk from calling a man in a poor state of health, and saddling themselves from the commencement with an assistant minister. At a meeting of the society, on the 28th October, 1766, 89 voted proceed, and 112 delay; so that Mr. Boston, after his long and fatiguing journey, could not but feel chagrined and disappointed.

It was a matter of deep regret to Mr. Baine of Edinburgh, that the proposal should have been cherished by Boston, and that his party should still have forced it upon him. Gillespie also saw the impropriety of the measure, and came to Glasgow to heal differences, and divert their attention to some other object. The attempt was vain. Boston was even offended to a very considerable degree with Baine and Gillespie, for intermeddling in a matter in which they had no concern. It was from this source that a slight misunderstanding, which at the time was greatly magnified by busybodies, sprang up between Boston and Baine.

The latter had too much practical wisdom not to perceive that

the translation of Boston, in present circumstances, was absurd; and that to keep up the project as a subject of keen agitation, was fretting his mind, and wearing down his constitution. Writing on this very point to Mr. Smith, the preses of the congregation (12th January, 1767), he says, "I believe the Jedburgh people will struggle the point with you, and you may refer it to the Presbytery's decision; but the melancholy truth is, that Mr. Boston is in such a bad state of health, that physicians there and in the metropolis, who have been advised, have very small hope of his recovery. Happy for his friends, zealous in this affair, if they can absolve themselves and their management from increasing the disorder, and hastening the death of a valuable man, who to our view might have, for some years, been useful among his own people."

In the face of strong remonstrances the friends of Boston still made light of his sickness, and urged on a moderation, which was fixed for the 29th of January,—Mr. Baine to preside. The presbytery was to meet on the 11th February and judge of the call. For some reason or other Mr. Baine did not fulfil the appointment—the moderation did not take place—and before another day could be fixed, Mr. Boston had seen the end of all his labours. Every thing was now in a state of confusion. Parties appeared among the managers,—quarrels and resignations took place,—and the friends of patronage held them up to scorn, and mocked at the liberties of the Christian people, as if a failure, by a visitation of Providence, in getting the man of their heart, could prove the worthlessness of their scriptural principles.

After the death of Boston the attention of the congregation was directed towards the Rev. Mr. Cruden, minister of Logie-Pert. He had indirectly been the means of originating the Relief congregation of Blair-Logie, and he had allowed himself to be nominated as a candidate for the Relief church, Edinburgh. He was a minister of good report. He was an acceptable preacher. He was also now willing to go farther than when he stood for College-street, and to be inducted into a Relief church altogether disconnected with the Establishment. He was accordingly elected 2d June, 1767, and next year the General Assembly pronounced upon him the same sentence which they had previously done upon Boston and Baine. He was "intercommuned" though not deposed. The first years of his ministry in Glasgow were highly encouraging. Immense crowds attended him; but

though a popular and somewhat eloquent preacher, he was a simple man, and not fitted to preside over a people so numerous, divided, and full of zeal for Christian liberty as the Glasgow congregation. He was narrow and bigoted in his views, and not suited to the meridian of the Relief church. It will yet be seen that he was a wedge, rather than a corner-stone to unite and strengthen the building.

To the history of the rise of these churches might be added similar records concerning the rise of others, which speedily followed in different parts of the country. In the course of two or three years flourishing Relief churches sprang up in Dunse, Anderston, Cupar-Fife, Dalkeith, Falkirk, Kilsyth, &c., which called and obtained for their respective ministers, the Rev. Messrs. Monteith, Joseph Neil, Lawrence Bonnar, Alexander Hutchison, Michael Boston, and John Graham. This was a rapidity of increase which was most gratifying to the friends of evangelical religion and religious liberty, but alarming to those who had taken measures to deprive the people of their rights as Christians, and subject them to the controlling power of the state in religious matters. Whenever they felt what an Establishment in its natural and necessary working really was, they speedily escaped from it. The sentiments which then generally animated the religious public are well expressed in the proposal which was circulated 1779, at the building of the Falkirk church: "It is time for all lovers of Christian liberty, and of the truth of the gospel, to bestir themselves, and to use all proper means warranted to them by the word of God and the laws of this realm, to maintain to themselves and transmit to posterity the liberty and exercise of their holy religion in all the parts thereof, as contained in God's word, the only rule of faith and manners." Over the whole face of the country the people were ready to listen to such appeals, and prompt to put them into execution.

The Establishment became alarmed. The Secession, split as it now was into two divisions, were successfully setting up rival churches in every town of any considerable importance. The Antiburghers had now about ninety-seven congregations, and sixteen vacancies; the Burghers forty-two settled congregations, and seventeen vacancies. The Relief were increasing apace. The danger was that the Establishment should, in a great measure, be deserted. An alarm was got up and sedulously spread, that these sectaries would entail a vast expense upon the country,

—consume the poor funds which were formerly collected at the parish-church door,—and that farmers and cottars, instead of paying rent to their landlord, would alienate the proceeds of their labour to the support of a swarm of dissenting clergy. A variety of motives, therefore, conspired to induce the General Assembly to take measures for setting their house in order, and, if possible, retaining the people within the walls of the Establishment. The political state of the country was also favourable to the introduction of popular measures. The whigs were at least nominally in office. The Rockingham administration was making great professions of liberty. The voice of America had been listened to, and the obnoxious stamp act had been repealed. It was expected that the Church of Scotland, which had hitherto been favourable to the whigs, would also obtain a little relaxation from the yoke of patronage, and thus win back many of those dissenters who had left her pale.

Accordingly an overture on schism was brought under discussion in the Assembly 1766, sent up from the Assembly of the preceding year. It speaks for itself. “In respect of the dangerous consequences that are to be apprehended from the increase of Secession from the legal establishment of this church, and as it is reported that no fewer than *one hundred and twenty meeting-houses* are already erected,—although it never was, nor is intended, that any sort of severity should be used against any of those persons, it is overtured, that it may be recommended to presbyteries to inquire into the truth of this fact: And further, as the *abuse of the right of patronage* has been one chief occasion of the progress of Secession, it is also overtured, that the General Assembly would be pleased to consider what methods may be employed to remedy so great an evil; and it is humbly submitted, whether it may not be expedient for this purpose to appoint a committee to correspond with presbyteries, and gentlemen of property and influence, and to report.” This overture produced considerable alarm among the Seceders, against whom it was mainly directed, with the view of breaking their ranks. It was very inquisitorial in its spirit. It disclaimed “severity” against their persons, but still it was thought to bode the thing which it carefully disclaimed. It covertly yet plainly affirmed that the schism of the Secession was likely to be fraught with “dangerous consequences” to the peace of the country. And a secret correspondence was to be carried on “with men of property and



influence" to "get the abuse of patronage" redressed and the evil remedied.

When the overture was under discussion, Dr. Robertson warmly opposed it, and in that manly spirit for which he has been often praised he castigated the trucklers to the ministry of the day. Said he, "I see many gentlemen here, Moderator, who have always uniformly differed from me as to the expediency of public measures, and these I regard and esteem as honest men, because they are consistent. But when I see men at one time promoting one set of measures, and at another espousing the opposite, perhaps as one ministry or another prevails at court, I must heartily despise such dishonourable truckling." The sentiment was noble, but it is doubtful whether he was entitled to the credit of acting himself fully upon it. Robertson had the ear of the Earl of Bute, who stood behind the throne, and was higher than the throne itself. Bute moved administrations like puppets at his pleasure. First one division of the whigs, and then another, came at this period into power. Even Chatham soon threw up the seals of office, because he was checked and controlled by a secret court influence. It mattered not who was minister, Bute was king of Scotland; and, after the death of his uncle, Archibald of Argyle, managed all the affairs of the church. With his countenance Robertson could easily set every administration at defiance, and make them ask his support, instead of cringing to their measures.

After a long and animated debate the overture was rejected. Baine, whose case was decided on the preceding day, blames the supineness of the popular party, while he confesses that, "on the other side of the House, the patrons of high Church authority were consistent with themselves."—"From the premises they laid down it was a just conclusion to throw out the overture; for, if the law of patronage be such a blessing as our modern declaimers say; if so far from being a source of mischief, it is productive of the most salutary fruits through the land, we ought to hug and hold it fast. Such were the encomiums liberally bestowed on this hard law by the genuine sons of the church." Kindling with indignation against their counsels and conduct, he asks, "Where is that corner of the nation in which religion, morals, sweet peace, bear not the scars of this law; and from the wanton, heavy hand of our rigid taskmasters laying it on, are they not bleeding to death under the blow?"

Has not this age seen the man, (Robertson,) nay, not a few of the professed ministers of Jesus Christ, take this law like a torch in their hand, a law in their case harmless, till kindled and lighted up by an Assembly's sentence, and then march with it in triumph from parish to parish, and incendiary-like, set all on fire where they came, and around them; glorying at the same time in these measures, and extolling them, perhaps, in a General Assembly, as the felicity of our land? Such have been the march and counter-marches of our boasting pretenders to moderation, morals, charity; such our stars of the first magnitude: and, as is most due, these, and these chiefly, have promises and preferment, for their signal services to the kingdom of Jesus Christ."\*

The church, however, was no doubt alarmed at her own doings, and was disposed in some measure to pause, review, and redress some of the oppressions which she had inflicted upon her own members. In the same year in which the schism overture was laid on the table of Assembly (1765), it also took off the sentences of suspension from sitting in a judicative capacity in presbyteries, synods, and general assemblies, under which Hunter of Saline, Daling of Cleish, and Spence of Orwell had remained for twelve years. 'They had been punished along with Gillespie for the same alleged fault, though not to the same extent. To be hung up for twelve years before Scotland as scarecrows of the danger of refusing to induct unpopular presentees at the mandate of the Assembly, was a long period. Patience, even receiving its yearly stipend, might be exhausted. As many were leaving the church on every side, they might also cut the cord by which they were suspended and become dissenters; and it was therefore deemed an act of prudence, as well as of justice, not to oppress them farther, lest they should send in their demission, and increase the oppressed heritage of God.

Even the friends of Gillespie began to think there might be some relentings towards him also, as his copartners in ecclesiastical guilt were cordially welcomed back into the bosom of the

\* 'Memoirs of Modern Church Reformation,' p. 16. The whole debate on the schism overture is preserved in the Scots Magazine, July 1766. A pamphlet was afterwards published in 1770, which contains the investigation as to the number of Dissenting churches, on which the schism overture seems to have been founded, and the selfish motives on which it was wished that dissent should be crushed. The statistical document which it contains is worthy of preservation. See Appendix.

church. An overture was therefore, in 1766, introduced into the synod of Glasgow and Ayr, to have the sentence of "deposition" removed, and to have him restored to the same condition as Boston and Baine, who were intercommuned, but not deposed. Something of the same kind, as already noticed, had been done towards Glas in 1739, when the sentence of deposition, passed upon him for his Independent principles, was changed and modified into that of excision. This overture about Gillespie made very slow progress, being suffered to sleep for years upon the records. After being put off in 1769, it came on for final discussion in 1770, when an overwhelming majority voted that he should still be considered a deposed minister, and the most bitter invectives were poured forth at the bar of the Assembly against him, and his brethren of the Relief, as being the most uncompromising foes of the church.

The debate must have been felt to be very insulting to Gillespie. It was accompanied by a bitter anonymous pamphlet on the "case" of Gillespie, for the guidance of the Assembly, full of the most virulent scurrility against him and the Relief ministers, and which drew forth at least three replies from the press. The first, which seems to be from the pen of Baine,\* blames Dr. W—r. (Webster) the old friend of Gillespie, with being the author or furnishing the materials of the scurrilous production. It begins—"Rev. Sir, no doubt you have read the case of your quondam friend Mr. Gillespie. Whether you are the author, as some say, or furnished the materials only, according to others, I cannot say. One thing is certain, that no one was better acquainted with the secrets of that case than you, having been, in Mr. Gillespie's younger years, his right trusty and well-beloved counsellor." The author of "the case" having ridiculed Gillespie "as a composition of the weathercock and the mule" in religion; and satirized his "monkish turn and solemn gloomy phiz," proceeds to show that the sentence of deposition could not be removed without great danger to the Establishment; and then waxing valiant he assails the Presbytery of Relief for "their pernicious measures, plots, and schemes all over the kingdom, as far as their influence can go." To this, Baine in his review of the "case" replies, "The Presbytery's scheme, it is true, does thwart and expose the pride and power of churchmen, whose wanton and unnecessary severities

\* 'The case of the Rev. Thomas Gillespie reviewed, in a Letter to the Rev. Dr. W—r.' By J. B. 1770.

are laying waste our native country, and with equal rapidity and baleful influence extinguishing religion and morals with it.”\*

“No man, I apprehend,” continues he, “ought to condemn the presbytery’s plan by wholesale, but he whose creed is composed of the few following propositions, viz.:

“That the Gospel of Jesus Christ is of very little benefit to mankind, and that another gospel will do the business fully as well.

“Although a pastor entering in violently upon a parish, with glaring marks of falsehood and dishonesty upon him, is justly odious to the people, yet may he promote their best interests by haranguing before empty galleries and pews, as well as if he preached, every Lord’s day, to a serious attentive audience.

“He who can digest these articles, and adopt them as his faith, must condemn the Presbytery of Relief as a pernicious junto. At present I am an infidel with regard to the above propositions.”

He thus gives a thrust at the heterodoxy and empty churches of the moderates, and indirectly claims for the Relief an opposite character.

In the course of next year, (1771,) Mr. Walker, of Dundonald, published ‘An Alarm to the Church of Scotland,’ in which he dwells particularly on the worldly and persecuting spirit displayed by the Assembly (1770) “in their treatment of the drunken Mr. Stewart, and the pious Mr. Gillespie.” The one they restored to the *status* of a minister, and the other they did by a vote declare unworthy of it. The one “had broken the divine law, whereas the other, by too strict a regard for it, had ventured to dispute the illegal authority which the Assembly had usurped, and were determined to maintain as far as worldly motives could have any in-

\* In the way of ridiculing the sectarian position assumed by the church towards the Dissenters and the supposed canon law, that no sentence but deposition could sunder a minister from his teinds, he says, “I have often wondered, why our established clergy were so shy of pulpit-intercourse with non-established brethren, though truly one with them in religious sentiments, complexion, and character.— In a late conversation upon this subject, ‘I suspect,’ said one of the company, ‘it may be owing to an unlucky discovery made a few years ago by a humorous writer, and adopted by not a few into their creed, viz., ‘That the church and kingdom of Christ is the Stipend.’”



fluence." "And now, may I not ask," says he, "in what has Mr. Gillespie erred? But I must correct my style; as, in my apprehension, the error is on the side of his opposers. I think, instead of any censure, he deserves the thanks of this church, and has them too from her genuine sons, for the firmness with which he maintained that important branch of subordination in our constitution, the subordination of the Assembly itself to the standing laws. And if lenitives are prescribed by our constitutional laws, they are necessary in such a case as his must appear even to his greatest enemies; yet where was the lenity of the last Assembly in refusing so very small and inconsiderable a mitigation of a censure he has now lien under almost twenty years, to the reproach (not of him, for it has added a veneration to his character, but) of this church? Indeed the mitigation sought was so small, that, for my part, I was ashamed to find that no more was moved for. But the more trifling that it was, so much the more did the refusal of it serve to manifest the persecuting spirit of the majority."\*

Dr. John Erskine, who was the personal friend of Gillespie, managed also to appear indirectly in his favour. As he was now the colleague of Dr. Robertson, it would not have been very seemly to have come out with a pamphlet in behalf of one whom his colleague, the leader of the Assembly, had not yet forgiven, and therefore he got an essay by Gillespie 'On Immediate Revelations,' and published it with a preface in which he covertly throws his shield over his old acquaintance, and defends his character. "I am happy in this opportunity of publicly testifying my esteem and regard for a faithful minister of Christ, and a meek and humble sufferer for conscience' sake. The hard, and, as I apprehend, unconstitutional sentence of deposition, passed upon him May 1752, and still standing unrepealed, for his refusing to bear a part in a settlement, which he thought he could not be active in without violating his ordination-vows, has made his integrity, and his forbearing and forgiving spirit, generally known. Indeed, in a speech (Dr. Robertson's) last General Assembly, his character was painted in colours that represented it as the reverse of all this. It was alleged, that he gloried in his deposition, and instead of accounting it any advantage, would despise and disregard his being restored to the exercise of his ministry in the Church of Scot-

land." Dr. Erskine adds, in wiping off the aspersions of the anonymous pamphleteer, that he has published this essay, that "the world may now see, and judge, with what justice ill-natured whisperers and backbiters, petulant declaimers, and dastardly mean-spirited anonymous scribblers, have aspersed him, as a weak wrong-headed enthusiast, incapable either to please or edify a judicious audience. Such wanton unprovoked defamation, especially from those whose situation gave them easy access to be well-informed, such stabs in the dark, bewray either a low and mercenary servility, courting favours or honours in this way to which it could not otherwise aspire, or a malicious depraved heart, that delights in insulting the oppressed. But the usefulness of his ministry needs not their witness; and indeed has higher witness than that of man. It has epistles of commendation, written, not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, in fleshly tables of the heart." \*

It is very questionable, how far Mr. Gillespie's friends in the church acted wisely in attempting to have his sentence of "deposition" modified into that of simple "exclusion" from the Establishment. He held his ordination not from them but from the English Dissenters. He was not asking to have the sentence of deposition modified. It no doubt proceeded from good motives on the part of his former brethren. As those who had been punished with him had been forgiven, something also, it was thought, was due to him, as he was an old venerable man, and had been the principal sufferer. The application at least served to bring out the temper of the dominant party in the Assembly. After nearly twenty years, they were as virulent against him as when first deposed. This was reading him a lesson at the close of life, that it was just as well that he had not "sojourned in Mesech nor dwelt in the tents of Kedar."

\* Preface, pp. 6, 7.

## CHAPTER XIII.

BEGINNING OF TROUBLES ABOUT TERMS OF COMMUNION.—DEATH OF COLIER.—ELECTION OF COWAN, AND REJECTION OF PIRIE.

No great principle was ever practically wrought out without producing partial ills, and breaking up many of the closest friendships. Christianity itself turned the world upside down. The free communion principles which the originators of the Relief Presbytery adopted, were too much opposed to the close sectarian views which had long been cherished under the Solemn League and Covenant which bound to national uniformity, not to meet with very decided opposition from many a quarter. They had to contend with indomitable prejudices, that were the growth of centuries, in the public mind. From this source sprang the first internal and external troubles of the Relief denomination. Some parties among themselves started back from free communion principles, when they saw the length to which they would be carried by them; and other sects thought they saw here a loose link in the Relief armour, and through it they endeavoured to shoot thousands of pointed arrows, that were exceedingly annoying, and which put the Relief fathers to their mettle to pluck them out.

So early as the summer of 1769, some of the elders of the Dunse Relief church complained to the presbytery, that Mr. Monteith, their minister, had gone to assist the Rev. Mr. Murray, an Independent minister of Newcastle, at the dispensation of the Lord's Supper,—“being a breach of Presbyterian church government to hold communion with one who condemned synods and assemblies, and the government of God's house.”\* Mr. Monteith, on the other hand, argued that Independents were many of them “visible saints,”—that it was a gross inconsistency “to

\* ‘A Discovery of the Sinfulness of the Principles of the Relief Church,’ &c. by Daniel Frazer, Dunse, 1770.

say that any man was a saint, and not to hold communion with him." He also pled the words of his call which the people had given, and the presbytery had sustained: "We invite you to be our minister, not as separatists from any of the Protestant churches, nor from any of the faithful ministers or members of the Established church in this land:" and certainly, said he, "they would not maintain that a dissenting church in England was not a Protestant church." The presbytery, in a kind of extrajudicial meeting, as the cause was not very formally brought before them, heard parties, and gave a deliberative judgment on the matter. They declared "that Mr. Monteith had done nothing wrong." This decision was of great moment, as it brought out the Relief terms of communion as to other dissenting churches; and showed that it was not merely with godly ministers in the Establishment, but in other religious denominations also, that they were prepared to hold fellowship as God gave them opportunity. The bulk of the congregation acquiesced in the decision, though some withdrew on account "of such latitudinarian principles and practices."

This process against Mr. Monteith was the less to be expected from the Dunse session, as Mr. Boston, at the very commencement of their church, when the Seceders were endeavouring to draw them away to their denomination, had by letter explained to them the terms of communion adopted by the Relief Presbytery. Writing to them from Jedburgh by the authority of the presbytery, 19th August, 1762, he says: "Our terms of communion are according to the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. We bind people to no 'acts' nor 'testimonies,' but the acts of the apostles and the testimonies of Jesus. We would tremble to think that our congregations should be tied up by any deed of ours to know no man but us, as if we were the only men, and wisdom would die with us. This would be a limiting of the Holy One of Israel, and a most arrogant and presumptuous confinement of the influence of the Holy Spirit to a party. This proud, selfish, and most absurd conduct, has, in all ages, been fatal to religion, and made it lie bleeding of wounds which it received in the house of its pretended friends. I heartily pray, therefore, that your people may be helped to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made his people free, and not to be entangled with yokes and bonds of men's making. Meet often at a throne of grace: earnestly beg that



He who leads the blind by the way that they know not, may direct both you and us in this weighty affair." This early document is of great value. It shows the catholic principles which were held by the Relief Presbytery when it was composed of Messrs. Gillespie, Boston, Colier, and Warden; and on what terms of communion they wished their churches to be founded. The statement of a principle, however, is often cordially assented to, and yet when it is wrought out, men will be alarmed at their own work, and under the force of ancient prejudices condemn what they cannot but in theory approve. It was so with some of the Dunse congregation, and, along with Mr. Frazer, they went back to the closer Presbyterian denominations from whence they had come. The wound was healed, but the scar was left. Mr. Monteith shortly after resigned his charge, and withdrew to Alnwick, England.

This was merely the commencement of similar disputes in other churches, that ultimately shook the Relief body to its centre, and which, during the hottest of the contest, some of its ministers, to their disgrace, rather glossed over than openly maintained. The great dispute had its origin in the circumstance of the Logie congregation calling and receiving the Rev. Alexander Pirie of Abernethy to be their minister in the room of the late Mr. Warden, after the presbytery had repeatedly refused to grant them a moderation in his favour.

Mr. Pirie, who was no ordinary person, produced much disturbance in the three rival religious denominations,—Antiburgher, Burgher, and Relief. He was, without doubt, one of the most talented and accomplished theological writers Scotland ever produced, and it is to the disgrace of his country that his life has never been written. His natural temper seems not to have been good, but his judgment was clear, his mind penetrating, and he was in many things, though he had his whims, far in advance of the times in which he lived.

He was brought up in connection with the Antiburghers, and when a young man, was so hearty for the Covenants, that when swearing the bond he did not merely hold up one hand like others, but stretched out both. He received license among them with the design of being sent on a mission to America; but, on the ground of indisposition, resiled from the enterprise. Being a young man of taste, and of no ordinary acquirements, he was appointed by the synod to superintend their class of moral

philosophy, which was then taught in connection with their theological hall. Several of his students having aimed rather pompously at a high degree of philosophical refinement, and having thrown some of their ambitious productions into the magazines of the day, they were rebuked, and suspended from church privileges. It having been ascertained that Pirie had recommended to his students an anonymous book, of which Lord Kaimes was afterwards known to be the author, entitled ‘*Essays on the Principles of Morality and Religion*,’ containing an Essay on “*Liberty and Necessity*,” which was believed to advocate something *like fate*, and to exclude “the sovereignty of God’s will and the punishableness of sin;” he also was condemned to be rebuked at the bar of the synod and deprived of his license. But Pirie was made of sterner stuff. He boldly declared that the sentiments of the Essay were in unison with his own, harmonized with the standards of the Secession, and challenged his accusers to prove the contrary. He was laid under “the lesser excommunication.” He protested to the court of heaven, and left the Secession court “uttering several offensive expressions in a low voice.” \*

The heterodoxy of the sentiments he maintained could not after all be very great, for he was received into the Burgher synod, even when lying under the sentence of “the lesser excommunication.” In this religious connection he was ordained minister of Abernethy, Fife. His falling under church censure among the Antiburghers, led him to consider the subject of excommunication, and next year, 1664, he published an Essay on the subject, which gave rise to much discussion, as it had much of that grasp of mind and acuteness of reasoning, for which all his writings are distinguished. In it are to be found the first glimmerings of those scriptural views of the nature of church power and of Christ’s kingdom, which he afterwards saw with the clearness of intuition, and advocated with irresistible force. While he scourges those ministers with briars and scorpions who had excommunicated him, he, at the same time, advocates the duty of mutual forbearance as to all doctrines and ecclesiastical matters of lesser importance.†

His views of covenanting now began to change. Instead of holding up both hands, as formerly, with youthful zeal, he,

\* Scots Mag. 1763. P. 525.

† Pirie’s Works, vol. iii. p. 123.

at his ordination among the Burghers, expressly declared that he bowed to the binding obligation of the covenants upon posterity, only in "so far as the *matter* of these covenants was *moral*." \*

In a short time he published his 'Essay on Covenanting,' which probably more than all other publications on the subject disengaged the mind of Scotland from an enslaving tradition. As a specimen of his plain powerful reasoning,—“Having seen the nature of Jewish covenanting, let us go on to see what kind of a duty it was, whether moral, ceremonial, or political. Moral, I think, it cannot have been, because moral duty is obligatory in all ages, and on all persons: but it is quite plain, that no such thing was done during the patriarchal age—the space of 2,000 years; nor during the law-scheme was this duty obligatory on the heathen, or on any people but the Jews alone, and those Gentiles who embraced the Jewish faith, or took hold of the Sinai covenant. Moreover, our Saviour, who is surely to us a perfect pattern of morality and religion, never performed any such thing, which he behoved certainly to have done if it had been a moral duty, otherwise he has not ‘fulfilled all righteousness.’ Yea, although he exhorted to the performance of every moral duty, yet he never mentioned this in the catalogue. If we would beware of alleging that Christ was a sinner, and that he was not a perfect pattern to us, let us never say again that national covenanting is a moral duty.” †

The Essay was anonymous, but no sooner did it come to light than it was surmised that Mr. Pirie was its author. The presbytery began to deal with him on the point, and after a little shirking he confessed the fact, and avowed its sentiments to be his own. He was speedily libelled. Peter Speedy, an elder, engaged to prove him a heretic on no fewer than 17 counts of erroneous doctrine ‡ as to the covenants alone. To these, however, was prefixed a charge of heresy concerning the incarnation of Jesus, founded on a sermon which he had preached nearly two years before. The charge was: “That the *radical* principles of Christ’s human body were not of the seed of the woman, but created by the Holy Ghost and brought from heaven.” This

\* ‘A Review of the Principles and Conduct of the Seceders,’ &c., by Alexander Pirie. Edin. 1769, P. 38.

† Pirie’s Works, vol. iii. p. 231.

‡ ‘A Narrative of the Process against Alexander Pirie.’ Edin., 1768.

alleged heresy was put at the commencement of the libel. Of this, Pirie loudly complained as a base device to damage him as a heretic in the estimation of the people. "Besides," says he, "when I was asked by the Presbytery, if I had taught that error, or if I believed it, I told them I had no such opinion, but that I utterly abhorred it. As they still urged the point, I took the Bible, the Confession of Faith, and Catechisms, and read my opinion from those books, and declared that this was my unfeigned sentiment."\* The Presbytery, however, maintained that he was in some way glossing the words of the Confession. As his ecclesiastical superiors, they certainly had a right to frame the order in which the counts of the libel were to be taken up. Panels in their own estimation are innocent beings. Witnesses were examined, and he was found heretical on the incarnation, and suspended from the office of the ministry. The Essay on Covenanting was never touched, and Pirie did not fail to tell them that they durst not, and that the charge of heresy was revived and got up to serve a purpose. He appealed to the synod. When the cause came before them they were disposed, rather by kind treatment to mollify Mr. Pirie, and on the ground of informality it was remitted back to the Presbytery. But to this he would not submit. He was ready to libel the Presbytery for gross injustice. He therefore declined their authority, gave in his demission as a Burgher, and, as his congregation clave to him, he continued to be their minister.

He now set himself, with a whetted intellect, thoroughly to examine the principles of the Secession, particularly as to covenanting and communion, and "soon found that their distinguishing principles were not the principles of the oracles of God." The wonder is, that *he* at least had not discovered this before, for his Essay on Covenanting was in the very face of their Testimony; and on this ground alone the synod might easily have made short work with him. Pirie by this time was a *Voluntary* in the best sense of the term, and had arrived at lucid scriptural views about the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom.

In 1769 he published, as already noticed, 'A Review of the Principles and Conduct of the Seceders,' which not unfrequently displays the workings of a temper fretted and soured; but whenever he drops down upon general discussion, he gives forth the

\* A Review of the Principles, &c., p. 24. Narrative, p. 31.



matured thoughts of a masculine mind. While hundreds are now felicitating themselves upon the discovery that there should be no connection between church and state, Pirie, seventy years ago, saw the fact as clearly as noon-day. "According to the Seceders," says he, "religion is to be established by civil authority, and supported by the influence of civil rewards and punishments: that is, after the clergy are secured in their benefices, by adopting the national system of religion, they are to be judges of the heretical character, and the king is to be their blind executioner to destroy all whom the clergy please to call heretics; yea, all who presume to worship God according to their own conscience, if it be not according to the clerical dictates. This is Antichrist, or the *Revelation-beast*. That beast described by John is plainly nothing else but clergy-authority, supported by the power of the kings of the earth, who must bring to condign punishment even their most loyal subjects, if the clergy please to call them heretics. This power may well be called *the beast*, because it deprives all under its influence of the exercise of their reason;—the king and clergy, by making them wolves; and the people, by obliging them to give up their understandings and consciences to others, which are the property of God alone. This is directly opposite to Christ. His kingdom is not of this world, *and so cannot be established by human might or power*, but by his Spirit alone. To establish truth, must be to establish it in the understandings and consciences of men, which all the laws and swords in the world cannot effect. Swords and consciences are very distinct things; and it is not easy to see how wealth, honours, and ease, in this world, or swords and gibbets, can convince men of the truth, or establish it in their minds. Paul desires us to pray for kings, not that they may give their power to the church, or commit fornication with her; not that they may establish her by a *royal patent*, or interpose their authority in matters of religion and conscience; but 'that we may live a peaceable and quiet life under them, in all godliness and honesty.' There is no direction given in all the New Testament to kings and civil rulers once to meddle with the understandings and consciences of men. Moral actions fall under the cognizance of human legislators; but who bade them dictate to me in matters of faith, or punish me for conscience and opinion's sake? Christians as such know no authority but Christ's, and no motives to influence them either to embrace or continue in his word, but such as he has presented in that

short emphatic verse,—‘He that believes, shall be saved; and he that believes not, shall be damned.’ To be influenced, then, in religion, by the hope of earthly rewards, or the fear of temporal punishments, is not to be influenced by the gospel; whose rewards and punishments lie chiefly beyond the grave, and contain all that is amiable and all that is dreadful in eternity.—*No king but Jesus has authority in or over the church, nor can his religion be supported by political sanctions.*”\*

Such notions were novel and startling. They served to draw public attention towards him as a speculative theologian; and the personal invectives which he launched forth against his old friends, and the overstatement he made of their principles, were salt to his pamphlet, and procured it many readers. He became a person of great notoriety. The Antiburghers having synodically condemned his opinions about liberty and necessity; and the Burghers having next condemned his opinions about the incarnation; and this latter process having been carried on at Dunfermline, Kirkcaldy, Perth, and wheresoever the Presbytery met, filled the whole of Fife and the surrounding districts with aggravated reports of his heterodoxy. His talents made him known, his temper made him feared, and his being twice censured made him notorious.

In these circumstances, which require to be stated, else what follows will not be understood, he was brought into contact with the Relief Presbytery; and, indirectly, he greatly damaged its interests. He produced a commotion within its churches which even led to the loss of several of them. Like the Secession the Relief undoubtedly derived benefit from him; but it was by passing through a tempestuous hurricane, of which he was the originating cause. The vacant congregation of Blair-Logie wished to call him. He was willing to join the Relief body, and become one of its ministers, whereas several of its members would on no consideration whatever give him access to their denomination, and amid these conflicting elements he became the spirit of the storm.

It was the practice of the Relief Presbytery at that time to grant to their congregations what was called a *Moderation at large*. They had very few licentiates of their own. The forming or vacant churches looked out for some person who would suit them, belonging probably to some other denomination; and, having gained his consent, they intimated the fact to the presbytery;

\* Review, pp. 4, 5.

got a moderation appointed ; called the object of their choice, and then carried up the Call to the presbytery, who sat in judgment upon every thing connected with the moderation. If they were satisfied, they sustained the Call; and, in due time, ordained the new brother as a Relief minister. In the present case, Messrs. Gillespie, Cruden of Glasgow, and Bell of Jedburgh, were strongly opposed to the reception of Pirie ; and, being resolved to crush the matter in the bud, they induced the presbytery to grant a moderation to Blair-Logie exclusive of Pirie, whose name they even inserted into the minute as a marked person. This gave great offence to Simpson of Bellshill, who was Pirie's warm and strenuous friend. He entered a long protest upon the records against it, as being subversive of Relief principles. He denied he was heretical. He considered it a gross outrage upon the principles of justice, that the Relief presbytery should set a mark of reprobation upon a man who was not before their court, and of whom they as a court knew nothing. Mr. Gillespie moderated. His brother, Robert Gillespie, from Edinburgh, went with him to Blair-Logie. The people were in a state of great indignation at not being allowed to vote for Pirie. In a body they rose and left the church. Robert Gillespie harangued them outside the door to return and vote for some other candidate ; but it was speaking to the wind. The Rev. Mr. Gillespie was, in this instance, sadly fretted at what he considered the humour of the people. The matter went back to the court, the people protesting against their alleged tyrannical procedure. There was, at this time, however, no court of appeal. There was hitherto only one presbytery. They felt themselves in a dead-lock. The congregation were immoveable. Mr. Simpson was indefatigable in urging their claims. At length the Rev. Mr. Bell of Jedburgh, and some others, gave way, and Mr. Simpson was appointed to moderate in a Call *at large*, without any limitation. The moderation took place 10th July, 1779. It turned out as might have been expected, for Mr. Pirie. The charge of heterodoxy was again *out of doors* revived against him. Extracts were made and handed about from his writings. Gillespie threatened to resign if the Call was sustained. Mr. Simpson abated nothing of his efforts, and held that the Call should be sustained ; and if they doubted of Mr. Pirie's orthodoxy, let him be examined before the Call was concurred with. The greater part of the ministers were of the same opinion ; but a few of them, assisted by a

majority of the elders, carried their measure, and the Call was rejected *simpliciter*. Against this decision Mr. Simpson again protested, and published his protests along with an account of a quarrel rising out of the subject with Cruden, in the shape of a pamphlet. It was intended to defend his conduct before his own people, to whom it was addressed, and to bring public opinion to bear against the majority in the presbytery.

The Blair-Logie church were not to be frustrated in the object of their choice. Having been denied, as they said, justice, they took the matter into their own hands. Mr. Pirie being connected with no religious denomination, he came among them without any formal induction, and commenced his ministry on 19th August, 1770. This affair made no little noise at the time.

Mr. John Moubray, elder of College-street, who had voted on the opposite side from his minister, Mr. Baine, felt it necessary to set himself and his friends right with the public. He published a pamphlet, entitled ‘Reasons, by a Lay Member of the Presbytery of Relief, which induced him to join the majority in refusing to concur with a Call from the congregation of Blair-Logie, to Mr. Alexander Pirie,’ and the burden of the whole publication is, that Mr. Pirie was heretical on two points,—the incarnation, and liberty and necessity. He throws overboard the seventeen counts in the libel before the Burgher synod about his anticovenanting principles. He declares that the Presbytery of Relief never adopted the Covenants, and that they practised forbearance in lesser matters; but he insisted that Pirie, as a follower of Kaimes, was unsound in the essential doctrines of religion. No one ever breathed a whisper against his anti-establishment principles.

Mr. Simpson, who once pled at the bar of the Commission of the Assembly, that he held “no separating principles from the Establishment,” had now so completely adopted liberal views, that he allowed his friendship for this thorough-going dissenter at last to carry him too far. He went and assisted Mr. Pirie at his first sacrament in Blair-Logie, when the congregation were in a state of revolt against the synod. Nay, he engaged Mr. Pirie to come and occupy his pulpit on a Sabbath when he was from home. Rebellion is infectious. The congregation copied their minister, who was following divisive courses. Learning on the Sabbath morning that Mr. Pirie was to preach, they locked the church-door, and kept him out. He preached to a considerable number of people from a window in the



manse. Mr. Simpson, on his return home, was greatly incensed. High words passed between him and the managers. On the spur of the moment he, June 1771, threw up his charge. The people were filled with astonishment and regret. At an irregular meeting of some of the managers and part of the session, it was resolved, in a moment of passion, to accept the demission of their minister, and to sever the sacred bonds by which they had been publicly united as pastor and people. Dunse being vacant because Mr. Monteith had now gone to Alnwick, Mr. Simpson received a harmonious call thither, and thus a branch of the Boston family (Mrs. Simpson was a daughter of Boston, Jedburgh) took up their abode in the very town where old Boston of Ettrick was born.

Pirie continued to labour for several years in Blair-Logie. He revolutionized the opinions of many in that quarter as to the nature of the kingdom of Christ. Mr. Patrick Hutchison, a Secession student, living in the neighbouring parish of Dunblane, adopted the new opinions, which became subjects of keen discussion in every family. Lawrence Bonnar, another Secession student, who was examined in the Burgher process against Pirie, also adopted his views as to the nature of the Messiah's kingdom, joined the Relief, and was settled in the forming Relief church of Cupar-Fife, 1772. Mr. Hutchison, as will yet be stated more fully, was ordained minister of the Relief congregation of St. Ninians, and lived, as they were near neighbours, on terms of the closest friendship and intimacy with Mr. Pirie, who was sincerely respected by Baine and several of the Relief ministers. Mr. Hutchison often went over to Blair-Logie and preached on the week days at sacramental occasions. And as they were both of the same views in regard to the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom, they sought each other's company with increasing pleasure, and contributed mutually to ripen each other's judgment on those new views which they had been led to adopt. Pirie, after a short time, petitioned to be received into connection with the Relief Presbytery; but his petition was not granted.

While these things were agitating the Relief church in no ordinary degree, and threatening to produce something like a disruption, death made a third breach in their small number. The Rev. Mr. Colier of Colingsburgh died on the 19th July, 1769. He had been ordained about eight years. He was their first choice, and they esteemed him very highly for his work's sake.

He has left behind him the reputation of having been a minister of rare talents, and of liberal enlightened principles. As he had been for a time a dissenter in England, he was fully indoctrinated into their scriptural principles of free communion, and is understood to have been an able advocate and defender of them in the Relief Presbytery at its first commencement. "Moved with tenderness, the congregation, at his death, gave a handsome tribute of affection to Mrs. Colier and her children." \*

In looking round for a successor to Mr. Colier, the Colingsburgh congregation fixed upon a person who came amongst them with a fair character and flattering prospects of success, but who afterwards proved a fretting sore to the Relief church. The Rev. James Cowan, who was their unanimous choice, was a native of the parish of Stow. His father was a Seceder. Having entered the University of Edinburgh, he prosecuted his studies with much assiduity under its different Professors, and, after he had finished his academic education, he became a student of Theology under Dr. Hamilton. It is not known what made him desert the church of his father, and prosecute his studies at the Divinity Hall of the Establishment; nor is the reason known why at the end of his theological course he went to England, and was licensed to preach the Gospel by a Presbyterian class of dissenters in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. After preaching in that neighbourhood for some time, he returned to Scotland, and having been heard by many of the friends of the Relief in Edinburgh, he was warmly recommended by them to the people in Colingsburgh. He appeared among them as a candidate, and, after hearing him officiate for a few sabbaths, they were satisfied with his deportment, talents, and ministerial gifts, and eagerly petitioned the presbytery for a moderation. The presbytery granted their request. As this was one of the earliest calls given by a Relief church, to fill up a vacancy by death, and as Mr. Gillespie was concerned in the management thereof, it is worthy of being detailed at length. It shows that the early practice of the Relief church in such cases, was the same as that now observed. The circumstances are thus recorded in the Colingsburgh Minute Book :

"The presbytery accepted of our petition, and granted our request.—Appointed the Rev. Thomas Gillespie to preach and intimate the moderation on the 22d of April. And the Rev.

\* Colingsburgh Minute Book.

Thomas Scott to moderate in a call, on the 3d day of May. The moderation was duly intimated by Mr. Gillespie. The congregation met on the day appointed—attended Mr. Scott; and after sermon, the design of the meeting was made known. Two calls were presented, and the people were desired to say whom they proposed the calls should be filled up with. Silence was for a small space. Then some were particularly asked at; and they named Mr. James Cowan, preacher of the gospel, and no other person was named, although the demand was made of the people to do so. They voted publicly for Mr. James Cowan, and subscribed his call to the number of four hundred and thirty—all communicants, who subscribed in the presence of the moderator. Afterwards they made choice of William Ramsay and Robert Fleming, to attend the presbytery with Alexander Scott, and give in their call to the Presbytery of Relief, which was done at their meeting, on the 9th of May (1770)."

When this call was laid on the Presbytery table they *sustained* it as being formally transacted, but they refused to *concur* with its prayer, and delayed putting it into the hands of Mr. Cowan for his acceptance. This delay was protracted from presbytery to presbytery for more than a twelvemonth. During all that time Mr. Cowan was allowed to preach at Colingsburgh, but the presbytery could not be induced to take any active steps for his ordination. At length the presbytery yielded, and he was ordained to the pastorate of the Colingsburgh church by the Rev. Messrs. Gillespie, Cruden, and Scott, on the 25th July, 1771. The Rev. Mr. Baine of Edinburgh, however, voted and protested against his ordination to the very last; and, though his determined opposition gave great offence at the time, yet not a few lived to acknowledge that it was only another instance among many of his being able to read deeply the spirit of man. Mr. Cowan became eventually a thorn in the side of the Relief church, caused her much pain, and greatly injured her unity, activity, and success. In an associated body one crotchety member may do an immense deal of harm. He did not harmonize with his brethren in their terms of communion, and this became the source of jarring and division to a very considerable extent amongst them. He would hold communion with none but Presbyterians, and was keenly opposed to the reception of Pirie. He became a mere tool in the hands of Cruden, both of whom were narrow and sectarian in their principles.

In 1776 Mr. Pirie addressed, through the press, three letters to "the Lay Member of the Presbytery of Relief," (Mr. John Moubray,) in which he repudiates his charges of heresy; and with much caustic irony shows how poorly qualified he was to be a heresy hunter, even although he was following in the track of the Rev. Adam Gib, who had also published a pamphlet against Pirie, on the vexatious dispute of Liberty and Necessity. Pirie begins by disclaiming the imputation of heretical opinions about the incarnation. He thus states the matter, and we leave it to others to detect the heresy. "As you dwell with such rapture on my teaching the Manichee doctrine, in self-defence, I am obliged to deprive you of that interesting part of your happiness, by telling you, that I have already published the testimony of my late hearers at Abernethy to the soundness of the sermon libelled; and I ever before, and have ever since, preached and believed that the body of our Lord was made of the seed of David after the flesh, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and of her substance, being conceived there by the power of the Holy Ghost, and born without sin. This agency of the divine Spirit was miraculous, superseding the laws of natural generation; hence the preparation of the Saviour's body is called a creation — 'Behold, I create a new thing in the earth, a Virgin shall encompass the man!' The impregnating power, or the power to conceive the body of Christ, was 'of the Holy Ghost,' but the material principles of that body were of the Virgin; for he was 'made of a woman.' I know no more of the matter. The Holy Ghost overshadowed the Virgin, and cast a shadow over this mystery: why should we pry too curiously into the secrets of Jehovah?"\*

On the doctrine of liberty and necessity, he declares himself of the same opinions as Edwards, though he confesses he had not seen Edwards on the Will, when he was convicted of heresy by the Antiburgher synod. His opinions, by the perusal of that able work, had probably gained something in light and consistency, for he discusses the subject with great grasp and power, and often, in his letters, puts both Gib and Moubray into very false positions.

Pirie laboured in Blair-Logie till the 14th June, 1778, when, having again applied to the Relief body for admission, and being

\* Three Letters, &c. by Alexander Pirie. Edin., 1776.



a third time refused, he left for Newburgh, Fife, and the congregation was again received back into the bosom of the Relief church, where it still remains. The effects of the dispute about Pirie were, however, of a very enduring character, and manifested themselves not merely in the extrusion of Simpson from Bellshill, but in other forms of a far more lasting and convulsive character.

## CHAPTER XIV.

FORMATION OF TWO PRESBYTERIES—FIRST MEETING OF SYNOD—  
THE CONTROVERSY WHICH ENSUED ABOUT RELIEF PRINCIPLES—  
THE RISE OF THE BEREAN CHURCH.

THE history of the Relief church takes an entirely new aspect after the year 1770. Previous to this period, it had been principally engaged in severing itself from the Establishment, and in setting up churches in oppressed districts of the country, but for ten years henceforward it was engaged in a hot warfare with the other dissenting bodies in the country. As it took different ground from all of them as to the covenants and terms of communion, each was anxious to vindicate its own position, and to attack the vulnerable points of its neighbour, and thus the affray became lamentably fierce.

The contest which ensued between the two branches of the Secession and the Relief is one of the most heart-rending pages in the ecclesiastical history of Scotland. It took place between parties professing in the main the very same religious principles, while it indirectly checked and arrested in a great degree the progress of dissent in Scotland. The Secession had by far the advantage in point of numbers, influence, and the compactness of their societies, as many of them had now been in existence upwards of thirty years. The first Seceders had made an impression upon Scotland, which gave inconceivable weight to their testimony against erroneous doctrines and laxness of morals. They might be wrong in their accusations, yet still in the first instance they had the public ear. The two Erskines, and Messrs. Wilson, Monerieff, and Fisher, who were the founders of the Secession, were such men as only appear in an age. They were persons of excellent talents, competent learning, deeply skilled in theology, possessed of first-rate pulpit gifts, and the uncompromising defenders of the rights and liberties of the people. Ralph

Erskine, who filled the whole of Scotland with his sermons, might be inferior to his brother in point of grace and pulpit tact, but he was a man of far more genius, and no one can read his writings without admiring the fecundity of a rare and richly furnished mind. To them belonged the honour of disenthraling the public mind of Scotland from slavish submission to the deeds of ecclesiastical courts binding the conscience, and of practically teaching their countrymen that a church was a church of Christ dissociated from the state as well as linked to it; and that out of its own resources it could support its ministers, and sustain the regular dispensation of all religious ordinances. They were the breakers up of the religious highway of dissent which they left open to all, and no heart can ever adequately lament over the fact that they should have turned round with so much united determination against those who were following in their track, and who were merely a portion of their army in a different uniform. They were conscientious, sincere, and zealous in carrying forward the church upon what they conceived to be Reformation principles; but how difficult is it to have the zeal of Elijah without his fire! By this time, indeed, the originators of the Secession were mostly gone to their rest; but they had been succeeded by a second generation of pastors worthy of their fathers, who had most of them been born dissenters, and the impression is all but universal, that they would have done well to have spared the Relief church till she had been a little better compacted, and manifested more clearly her features. This is not said in a spirit of acrimony, but of the deepest grief. The Relief were too proud, and petulant of their liberality, and scriptural principles, and the chastisement which was inflicted was with a heavy hand, and from numerous quarters. To a certain extent, indeed, God brought good out of evil, but the great evil can never be remedied; and the principal thing which their successors should do, is to look candidly at the facts, and the language which was employed; and, by sweetness, to suck out every particle of poison which may still lurk in the bottom of the wound, so that the health of God's people may be recovered, and peace and happiness be fully enjoyed. No sects should be rival sects. Drops of dew naturally fall into each other's embrace.

These remarks are necessary to prepare the reader for the scenes which are about to be faithfully narrated. History is worthless unless it records without aggravation or palliation events as they

occurred. The war, which first appeared within the bosom of the Relief church, soon began to rage without her courts, and the public stepped aside to see what would be the end.

Ever after the dispute about Pirie, the first Relief presbytery was broken up into two parts. They separated into two divisions, called the Eastern, and Western Presbytery. The Western Presbytery very improperly took in Dunfermline and Colingsburgh into their number, so that it was rather a faction as to feeling between Cruden and Cowan, than a proper division as to locality and convenience. Accordingly, a general consultative meeting of both Presbyteries was held at Edinburgh, 27th May, 1772, when the two presbyteries, in a more formal manner, recognised each other, and agreed to meet next year in a synodical capacity. On the 26th May, 1773, they accordingly met in virtue of this appointment; the Rev. Mr. Baine was chosen moderator, preached, and constituted the synod.

These two meetings, and the business transacted in them, became very important in the history of the Relief body. Cruden and Cowan, who acted together, were in bad temper with their brethren. They held close sectarian opinions on the subject of church fellowship, and wished ministerial and Christian communion restricted to Presbyterians who were visible saints. Neither of them, for personal reasons, had any great liking to Baine, who was now the leading minister in the connection, as Gillespie, from the increasing infirmities of years, and a kind of spasmodic bowel affection, could not travel, and never was at a meeting of synod.\* Cruden spurred on Cowan at the consultative meeting to submit a question to them on their terms of communion; and they two managed to put it in a very insulting form. The affair of Pirie, and the part which some had acted in that matter, were evidently pointed at in an ungracious way, as if they were willing to hold communion with men avowedly unsound in the principal doctrines of Christianity. "A motion was made by Mr. Cowan, desiring to know the mind of the meeting, with respect to holding ministerial and Christian communion with those of the Episcopal and Independent persua-

\* Mr. Gillespie, writing to a friend in Falkirk, 11th August, 1770, says—"The day after I came home I was seized with a colic, which has been severe upon me without intermission every day since, Sabbath excepted, and has weakened me much; therefore, it is my duty to avoid toil of preaching as much as possible till strength is recovered."



sion; and with respect to those who are unsound in the essentials of the Christian faith; particularly by their publications to the world.

“With respect to the last of these, the meeting unanimously agreed, that their principles did not allow them to hold communion with such.

“With respect to the other, viz. ministerial or Christian communion occasionally with those of the Episcopal or Independent persuasion, the meeting being of different opinions, put a vote; Hold communion with those of the Episcopal or Independent persuasion occasionally, upon supposition always, that they are by profession visible saints, or not? And the roll being called, and votes marked, it carried, Hold communion. And therefore the meeting find it agreeable to the principles of the Presbytery of Relief to hold communion occasionally with such.”\*

The subject was again taken up at the first meeting of synod, 1773, when the members of court, after having had the matter a year before them, gave a deliberate and unanimous judgment on their terms of communion as a religious denomination. “With respect to the overture concerning ministerial and Christian communion, the synod were unanimously of opinion that it is agreeable to the word of God and their principles occasionally to hold communion with those of the Episcopal and Independent persuasion who are visible saints.”† This decision, unanimously and deliberately come to, and so entirely different from the modern principles of the Church of Scotland, the two branches of the Secession, and the Cameronians, was kindling the torch of war amongst all the religious professors of the land. By many of the adherents of the Relief it was gloried in as the dawning of a better day for the torn and bleeding church of Christ; but by others, and particularly by other religious denominations, it was considered as subversive of all church order, and as impiously *relieving* men from those sacred national vows and covenants which were binding upon them. Hold communion with Episcopal and Independents! These were the very parties against whom the Solemn League and Covenant was framed. The whole country, therefore, rang with “latitudinarian, unscriptural terms of communion.” To stem the strong tide which was setting in from various quarters against the synod, the Rev. Mr. Neil, Ander-

\* ‘A Just View,’ &c., p. 14.

† Synod Minutes, p. 4.

ston, in 1773, published a discourse on the Nature of Christian Communion, in which he endeavours to cast oil upon the troubled waters, and vindicate the principles of Catholic communion on the authority of Christ. "In the Church of England," says he, "there have been, and still are, ministers as well as private Christians eminently pious,—sound in the great doctrines of the gospel,—zealous for their God and Saviour's interests, and in promoting the salvation of lost sinners. Were such ministers providentially in this country for a while, and express their earnest desire to preach or join with us in the sacrament of our Lord's Supper, in the manner that we celebrate that sacred solemnity in this church, have we a warrant from the word of God to refuse, at least, such occasional communion with them, because they have not the very same views of these ceremonies as we have? or suppose men of another denomination, such as the great Dr. Owen, Goodwin, &c., in the last century, and the late Dr. Watts, Doddridge, &c.,—men singularly endowed by heaven with grace and holiness, of extensive learning, by which they were qualified to be burning and shining lights in the church of Christ, and though they be dead, are yet speaking for God in their inestimable writings; and many, through the divine blessing, are receiving spiritual and eternal benefit by them,—if these holy and great men were alive, or if any, like them, should offer to join with us in the ordinances of the gospel, if we should reject them because their views of church government are not the same with ours, for any thing that appears to me from the divine records, we might justly expect such a reprimand from our final Judge as this,—By what authority did you refuse to hold communion with my servants? and who gave you that authority?" \*

Appeals, however, to scripture or to Christian candour were in a great measure lost. The old doctrine of covenanted uniformity had still a strong hold over a great portion of the public mind. Cowan had stirred his people to rebel against the synod on account of the "monstrous classing of Presbytery, Episcopacy, and Independency."† In Glasgow, Cruden followed the same tactics. He factioned also with the vacant congregation of Bellshill, and endeavoured to get Mr. Bell from Jedburgh, as its pastor. Some of the elders complained to the presbytery, and the scheme failed. Having been frustrated in his plans, he absented himself from

\* 'Discourse on the Nature and Necessity of Christian Communion,' p. 14.

† Colingsburgh Minute Book.

the meeting of synod, 1773, and from all the meetings of the Glasgow presbytery, which, on the petition of the Anderston session, was now remodelled. He took no share in its business, and was appointed to preach in none of its vacancies. In a fretted and factious spirit he continued his ministry among his people till 1774, when he left them, went to London, and advised them to go back to the Establishment. Some years after he returned on a visit to Glasgow, and made no secret in acknowledging to some of his former congregation, that he had done wrong; but said he,—“I was deceived.”

Amid these troubles and convulsions, the synod could not allow their principles of communion to remain, like an axiom, on their Minute Book, without any explanation. They were compelled to speak out. Their churches required to be enlightened. The religious public would not permit the matter to rest.

When the synod, therefore, met in June, 1774, they drew up and adopted an explanation and defence of their former judgment for the use of their churches. “The synod being informed that their late judgment with respect to ministerial and Christian communion, first given at the consultative meeting, at the desire of Messrs. Cruden and Cowan, had been mistaken by some and misrepresented by others, to the disturbing of several congregations, and the stumbling of well-disposed people; the synod therefore think themselves bound to give an explanation, and fully express their sense of said judgment.”

1. “They say, As our opinion with respect to that great article of the communion of saints, we presumed, had been no secret, it would not have occurred to us, to have delivered our mind upon it, had not the importunity of the above two members induced us to it.

2. “We have been mistaken and misrepresented exceedingly, either by the weak, or the designing, who have thought as if in that judgment of ours, we had not been of the same mind with what is expressed in the 26th chapter of the Westminster Confession of Faith, sections first and second, where our opinion of that important point is fully set forth, and the doctrine contained therein is accordingly adopted by us. Nor have we been less injured by any who have alleged, as if by that judgment we had opened a door to fellowship with the unsound in the essentials of the Christian faith, or the immoral; or even with the Episcopalians in their hierarchy and unscriptural ceremonies; or with In-

dependents in their peculiar notions of church government. While, at the same time, we scruple not to affirm, because we believe there are of both these denominations, who, from the most satisfying marks, appear to be received by Christ; and therefore we dare not deny them.—Though, when they join in communion with us, we do not conform to them, but they to us. ✓

3. “It is perverting, not the spirit only, but the very letter of our judgment, to say, that any little difference in our practice, relative to that point, subjected to censure: members being left at liberty to judge, in particular circumstances, what should be most for edification: Or, in other words, that this our sentence does not so bind to conformity, as that difference in opinion or practice should make us decline communion one with another.

“Upon the whole, the synod think it their duty to exhort those under their inspection, not to be soon staggered by unfavourable reports that may be spread, either by the mistaken, or the malicious: to be on their guard against such as may zealously affect them, but not well; and that they preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”\*

They were now thoroughly committed to these principles, and though they had been willing, it was impossible to shirk or shun their discussion, if any one from the press should fairly and honestly assail them. The coming conflict speedily began.

The consultative meeting had indeed broached no new doctrine on Relief terms of communion. “Their opinion as to the communion of saints was no secret.” So early as 1770 they had been attacked from the press by the Rev. Mr. M’Millan, Sandihills, for “their mixed communion with the Established church,—for their relieving the consciences of men from the yoke of the national sacred moral vows and covenants,—and from the strictness of true Presbyterian discipline and government,—and for their latitudinarian, unscriptural terms of communion, founded on a blind supposition of men’s goodness.”†

Now, however, there was a regular judicial minute on the subject, and a pretty broad explanation; so that here was a mark set up at which controversialists could point their arrows. Extracts of the minutes were furnished by Mr. Cowan to the Rev. Mr. Bennet, Cupar, who began the conflict between the Secession and Relief. Because Relief terms of communion were akin to those of White-

\* Just View, pp. 14, 15.

† Protestation against Toleration. Preface, p. 6. 1770.



field, who had contributed exceedingly to liberalize the mind of Scotland, he *nick-named* the Relief “Scots Methodists.” His pamphlet is chiefly confined to the Relief terms of communion, which, as might be expected, he strongly condemns. He opens with a negative and positive view of what he considers the Relief scheme, and this contains the pith of his small publication. “It is not a relief from, or an antidote against lordly Prelacy, which, we have reason to fear, may yet overspread the covenanted lands of Britain and Ireland. Nor is it any security against the prevalence of Independent and latitudinarian tenets, whereby the beautiful order and government our Lord Jesus has appointed in the church, is turned into anarchy and confusion.— For they declare their readiness, to join in sacramental fellowship, both with Episcopalians and Independents, whenever occasion serves; and that, while they avow, and profess themselves to be so.

“The real relief offered, if any choose to esteem it as such, is, a relief and freedom from the yoke of Christ. A freedom from the inviolable obligation all ranks of persons, in Britain and Ireland, are under by solemn oath, to cleave to all the truths of Christ, without dividing them into essentials and non-essentials:—to cleave to all his ordinances, respecting worship, discipline, and government; as contained in the divine law and testimony, and held forth therefrom, in the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the other received standards of the Church of Scotland: and to testify in their places and stations, against all contrary evils and heresies. It is a relief and freedom, from being under any necessity of making an open and explicit profession of soundness in the faith: and of signifying their approbation of any test of orthodoxy, drawn from the scriptures, by the spiritual guides of the church: however consistent with, and clearly founded upon the word of God, the same may be.

“This is the relief offered: but none can avail themselves of it, but at the expense of robbing the Lord Jesus of the glory of an open testimony to his truth; and their own souls of a special piece of armour, against the cunning craftiness of such as lie in wait to deceive.”\*

He was quickly answered by a “Lover of Truth,” in a

\* ‘Terms of Communion, agreed upon by the Scots Methodists: (but generally known by the specious denomination of the Presbytery of Relief. Their own Explanation of said Terms, with Remarks upon both. In a Letter from a Presbyterian to his Friend in Aberdeen.’ Pp. 9, 10.

pamphlet entitled "A Just View of the Principles of the Presbytery of Relief," the author of which is understood to have been the Rev. Mr. Campbell, Dysart, son-in-law of Boston of Jedburgh,—who endeavoured to show that the Relief terms of communion were scriptural, consistent with the Confession of Faith; and "every person," says he, "acquainted with the synod, knows that their principles were still the very same in all respects as they were when Boston and Gillespie left them by death." The pamphlet is a running contradictory commentary upon every paragraph of Bennet's letter, and thus the matter in their hands became a kind of personal squabble into which Cowan's name is often introduced.

This skirmish began the conflict, but persons of a very different calibre soon rushed forward to the field of conflict. The Macmillans republished their Testimony in 1777; and "considering," say they in their Preface, "the vast increase of public corruption and all kinds of error, and the many wild and strange sects formerly unknown amongst us, that have appeared since the first edition was published, it was thought needful to bear testimony" against them; and one of these "strange and wild sects" is the Relief, who are thus characterized: "Next to the Methodists, or perhaps contemporary with them, there appeared a new faction of professed Presbyterians, who, upon their first association, thought proper to distinguish themselves, by embellishing their judicial character with the specious motto of RELIEF;—whereas, in regard that by their own profession, practice, and principles of constitution, they are neither in the church nor out of the church, and yet act separately from her, and in opposition to her, gathering one church out of another, they ought to have called themselves, and to be called by others, the Schismatical Presbytery, instead of the Relief Presbytery; or perhaps in consideration of their very licentious unscriptural terms of church fellowship, conform to which they declare their readiness to join promiscuously in communion with almost every churchman, and every sectary whatever, without due regard to orthodoxy or soundness in the faith, but upon a blind supposition of their saintship, they might best of all be called Scotch Methodists." It is melancholy to read such abuse.

The Rev. James Ramsay, minister of the Antiburgher church, Glasgow, in 1778, published 'The Relief Scheme Considered,' "from a full conviction of its unscriptural nature,—its tendency

to ruin the best interests of religion,—with a desire to contribute somewhat to check its progress, and baleful influence.” “The leading mischief of the whole scheme,” says he, “seems to lie in the unscriptural plan of church communion adopted by it. Whitefield’s catholicism was cherished only in the bosom of individuals for several years. Numbers liked (it), but knew not how to reduce it to practice. Every society was shy of adopting it for the groundwork of their fellowship, till a few restless, discontented, and interested men found it a proper decoy to a heedless unthinking age,—a radical principle suited to their taste—which bade fair to gather a large though disjointed party.”

The pamphlet, which is ably and acrimoniously written, taxes the Relief founders with having left the Establishment without protesting against its defections,—still holding communion with it,—issuing no testimony for the truth,—throwing open their communion to all visible saints,—making a distinction between “essentials” and “non-essentials,”—breaking down the hedge of the presbyterian church government, and acting contrary to the Confession of Faith, which was framed not with the design of receiving Episcopalians and Independents into occasional communion; but according to the Solemn League on which it was based, with the design of extirpating them. The pamphlet, from its numerous personal thrusts, and the names of all the early Relief ministers being slightly concealed under their initials, as well as its piquant style, must have been a telling production at the time it was written. In a cowardly manner Mr. Ramsay withheld his own name from the first edition, the year, the place, and even the name of the printer.

It was now necessary that some person connected with the Relief synod should vindicate its sentence, and defend the constitution and practice of the Relief church, otherwise the public would consider them indefensible, and the accusations of an enemy would pass current for truth. The person who, in some respects, came reluctantly forward (as he was at the time in a poor state of health) was the Rev. Patrick Hutchison, of the Relief church, St. Ninians. It was well he did so. He was peculiarly fitted for the task. Mr. Hutchison was a native of Dunblane, where his father was a farmer, and an elder in the Antiburgher Secession Church. He was educated for the ministry in the same religious connection. He was just about ap-

plying for licence when his views underwent a change; and he, from conviction, joined the Relief church. The account he has given of himself is simple, candid, and interesting. "In my early days, I was myself strongly attached to the Secession-scheme. I did not then understand its nature and tendency. Unfortunately, without inquiring into it, I thought it to be a good scheme, and embraced it, pled strenuously in the defence of it against every person I met with, who opposed it. I was so fond of this scheme, that I scarcely could think that any person was a Christian who was not a Seceder. I was afterwards led, in the kindness of Providence, to inquire into the grounds of my religion, and to examine that scheme of principles which I then believed, by the word of God, and some other performances that fell in the way. The consequence was, that my confidence began to abate, in the peculiar principles of the Secession. As I proceeded in the inquiry, I began to doubt about these principles, and at last to be satisfied of the unscriptural nature of this scheme. The consequence was, that I immediately disconnected myself with the Seceders, as my convictions of truth and duty required. And, as I have had occasion, in my situation and circumstances in providence, to consider the peculiar scheme of the Seceders, my quondam friends, with close attention, I am happy in the choice which I have made. For, now, I am as fully convinced, that their peculiar scheme is without a foundation in scripture, as I am convinced, that the Bible is the word of God. No unprejudiced man, therefore, can blame me for writing against a scheme, which I so firmly believe to be contrary to the word of God."\*

It was the case of Pirie, and the publications connected with it, which wrought a change in the mind of Hutchison. He came over sometimes from Dunblane and heard him at Blair-Logie. When he became a preacher in connection with the Relief, he was appointed assistant to Mr. Baine in Edinburgh; and, as the elder of College-street, he sat in the first meeting of the Relief synod. He thus began his career as a Relief minister in co-operation with the person who, of all others, was the best qualified to instruct him in Relief principles. He had naturally a strong discriminative mind. He was an honest, open-hearted, religious man,—zealous for the doctrines of salvation by grace,—a firm friend of civil and religious liberty, and preached

\* 'Messiah's Kingdom,' p. 164.



and wrote with great eloquence. Being of a warm temperament, he, when excited, called things rather too plainly by their own names. If he had possessed less feeling, he would have used more measured language, but his pamphlets would have slumbered on the shelves instead of being read from house to house.

Mr. Hutchison took the field in 1779, by publishing ‘A Compendious View of the Religious System maintained by the Synod of Relief; together with a distinct account of the points in difference between the synod of Relief and the national Establishment on the one hand, and the Secession on the other.’ On his title-page he inscribed a motto from Witsius as descriptive of his party :—

“ In necessariis Unitas,  
In non necessariis Libertas,  
In utrisque Charitas.”

With much good sense and great tact he did not make his pamphlet a personal squabble with Ramsay, but took in a pretty wide field. He gave it body, so that it appeared before the world as “the Relief System;” while yet, as he went along, he was both vindicating the Relief, and assaulting the peculiarities of the Secession. His pamphlet consists of three parts. In the first, he gives a view of the religious doctrines taught by the Relief. It is an excellent compend of evangelical theology.\* In the second, he specifies the points in which the synod of Relief differ from the national Establishment. He condescends on two,—legal preaching, and intruding ministers by patronage upon vacant congregations without a Call from the members of the church. He shows clearly that there was no patronage “when the church of Christ stood upon its own foundation, and was not kneaded with the worldly kingdoms; which heterogeneous mixture hath often since marred the beauty and the glory of her original simplicity, and the spirituality of her form and constitution, and dressed her in the gaudy attire of an harlot.”

In the third part he gives an account of the points in which the synod of Relief differ from Seceders. He cheerfully bears testimony to the Seceders as being a respectable body; that their ministers are orthodox in the great system of evangelical doctrines; and that they have, under their inspection, a great number of serious and well-disposed Christians. He lays it down

\* See Appendix.

as a preliminary objection to their system, that "they build their scheme, or sit down (as they call it) on certain civil establishments of religion, whereas they should have built it upon the better foundation of the apostles and prophets." Having put in his caveat against the "Establishment of Christianity" by the "*civil legislature*," he proceeds to discuss, at great length, three points on which the Relief differ from the Seceders. 1. Their anti-toleration principles. 2. Their opposition to the occasional hearing of evangelical ministers not of their own party. 3. The unscriptural narrowness of their terms of communion. He thus carried the war at once into the enemy's camp, and put them upon the defensive. Both parties, with too much truth, accused each other of palming heresies the one upon the other which they indignantly disclaimed. The Relief maintained that their communion was not *loose* as alleged by the Secession, but *free* to visible saints, and to them only. And the Secession maintained that their principles were not persecuting, as the Relief gave out, but that they merely wished to extirpate hereties by moral means, and by refusing them the active countenance of the state.

It would be insufferable to analyze at length the contents of all the pamphlets which were now in rapid succession poured in upon the public mind, and which went over the same ground again and again with more or less ability. It is necessary, however, to notice a very heavy blow which was inflicted upon the Relief system in the year 1779, by the Associate or Burgher synod. A committee of their number published a re-exhibition of their Testimony, to which they added an Appendix, in which they brought several distinct charges against "the Presbytery of Relief." "This scheme," say they, "stands upon the ruins of the grand distinguishing principles of the Reformation; in as much as all the abettors of it are animated by a spirit of uncommon opposition to the nature and design of our covenants, the national and solemn league; the moral obligation of which they absolutely deny, and treat with the utmost contempt. Many of their ministers, contrary to the standing laws of the church, deserting their charge in the Establishment, or elsewhere, without the consent, or intervention of ecclesiastical authority, are chargeable with a most glaring schism, while they pretend to be still within the bosom of the Established church, and actually hold communion with her; and yet have erected ecclesiastical judicatories distinct from, and independent of her. It does not, to this day,

appear to the world, that they abandoned their former charge, on account of those defections, which prevail in the church, and which obliged others, in former times, to withdraw from her communion; since, it would seem, they never offered a testimony against any one of them, before the judicatories to which they were then in subjection, even when some of them might have done so at the bar of the General Assembly. They have evidently perverted the doctrine of our Confession of Faith, relative to the Communion of Saints: and their terms of communion are indeed very different from those of the Church of Scotland in her best times; and are so general and undetermined, that they will admit Protestants of every denomination. They seem to be under too little concern to keep pure and entire all the ordinances of Christ, according to his express command: and while they separate the privileges from the discipline of the church, not duly considering, that the latter is the guardian of the former, they attempt to put asunder what God hath joined together, to the open encouragement of immorality, by neglecting the exercise of some of the most essential branches of church government and discipline.”\*

Such matters would scarcely obtain a hearing now from the public mind, but at that period they were the topics of public discussion, and had a great degree of importance attached to them. There were then no great missionary enterprises to keep different sects and parties from grinding each other's faces. Though the ink of Hutchison's pamphlet against Ramsay was scarcely dry, yet he had instantly to come forth from the press again to meet this synodical attack, which bore the impress of some of the best men of the age. His ‘Animadversions on the Re-exhibition of the Burgher Testimony,’ followed in rapid succession upon the testimony itself, and being much smaller and cheaper, outran the more weighty production. In answering these accusations he writes with even more than his wonted fire. “It is equally presumptuous,” says he, “and contrary to truth in the synod to assert, that the Relief scheme stands upon the ruins of the grand distinguishing principles of the Reformation. I shall, at present, mention two of the grand distinguishing principles of the Reformation, that the reader may be able to see with what justice, truth, or decency, this heavy charge is brought against the Relief scheme by the Burgher synod.

\* Judicial Testimony, pp. 177—179.

(1.) "The great and important articles of a sinner's justification before God, by the merits of Christ alone, in opposition to the merit of good works, and works of supererogation, maintained in the church of Rome, is one of the grand, distinguishing, and radical points of the Reformation. And let me ask, does the Relief scheme stand upon the ruins of this great article of the Reformation system? Do not all the Relief ministers preach, with frequency and plainness to their hearers, this great doctrine both of scripture and the Reformation, that sinners are justified, in the sight of God, by faith in the righteousness of Christ alone? None, who have ever heard them, free from prejudice, will deny it; and none, who have a proper regard to truth, will insinuate the contrary.

(2.) "Another grand distinguishing principle of the Reformation, is the right of private judgment in matters of religion. This is one of the chief glories of the Protestant cause, and lies at the very foundation of it. The first reformers pleaded this right, and pleaded it with success, against the unhallowed encroachments of the church of Rome, a church infamous for obtruding upon mankind an implicit belief of the imperious dictates of the infallible see, and for committing the most abominable depredations on the sacred rights of Christians, to judge for themselves in matters of religion and the worship of God. Now, the Relief scheme is so far from sitting down upon the ruins of this radical, grand, distinguishing principle of the Reformation, that it is one of the grand, distinguishing principles of the Relief scheme. It is manifestly one great leading design of the synod of Relief to patronize and defend the sacred rights of conscience and private judgment, and other branches of our Christian liberty, in opposition to the depredations made upon them from whatever quarter. I add, that the Covenants National and Solemn League, which the Seceders call the grand distinguishing principles of the Reformation, stand upon the ruins of the right of private judgment, because they admitted of no toleration to any who differed in their judgment from the religious system contained in them, but such were to be punished with all civil pains. And the Secession scheme having adopted the religious uniformity established by these covenants, evidently stands upon the ruins of the right of private judgment, which is a radical principle of all true reformation, and without which there can be no right reformation in the New Testament church. Every anti-tolera-



tion scheme of principles stands upon a popish foundation, though many truths of the gospel be contained in it.

“I see the synod find great fault with some of the first Relief ministers, for leaving their charges upon the Establishment, and quote (in their notes) some things in the books of discipline and decrees of the Church of Scotland, appointing such to be censured and even deposed from the office of the holy ministry. But the synod show their ignorance of the proper application of these statutes, and the objects to which they extend. They only respected those ministers, who, without the consent of the judicatories of the Church of Scotland, deserted one charge, and accepted another, in the same church. But they were never meant to extend to ministers of other churches, or to those who see it their duty to leave the Church of Scotland, and accept of charges in a different religious community. Besides, these statutes were mere church appointments, without any foundation in the New Testament. If it be said, that they were statutes framed in a reforming period of the church; I reply, that I have no great opinion of any reformation in the church which has not its foundation in the word of God, but in the mere authority of the church.

“It may not be improper to inform the synod of a thing of which they seem ignorant, that the Relief synod do not maintain that real saintship in the sight of God is the rule of the church's judgment in admitting men to sealing ordinances, but visible saintship, consisting in a competent knowledge of the truths of religion as the object of faith, and a good conversation.—The Seceders have not yet proved that the terms of communion established in the Church of Scotland, in what they call her best times, were scriptural terms of communion. Actual covenanting was the term of communion both in the church and state of Scotland, in that period which the synod allude to, as the laws both of church and state in that period show; but I suspect that the synod will be gravelled not a little, to prove from scripture, that such a term of communion ought to have been established either in church or state. The question, if they would consider the matter rightly, is not, What were the terms of communion in the Church of Scotland at any particular period? but what are the terms of communion appointed by the Lawgiver in Zion to be observed by the Christian church, in all places, and at all times? The infallible word is never wrong, but the church is often so, in

her terms of communion. It is truly surprising to see with what assurance the synod assert, that the Relief terms of communion admit Protestants of every denomination. Socinians, Arminians, Antinomians, and Quakers, are Protestant denominations; but being unsound in some of the essential articles of religion, the Relief terms of communion will admit of none of them. The synod would only have transgressed the boundaries of truth a little farther, if they had maintained that the Relief church receives into her fellowship Papists, Mahometans, and heathens.

“Another gross misrepresentation they charge upon the Relief church is—‘They seem to be under too little concern to keep pure and entire all the ordinances of Christ, according to his express command, while they separate the privileges from the discipline of the church.’ What an unjust insinuation is it, in the synod, to assert that the Relief church separates the privileges from the discipline of the church! It is true, indeed, that she admits into her communion worthy Christians from some other denominations, upon sufficient certificates of their moral and religious character, and this has evidently a respect to that order and purity of discipline, which Christ has appointed in his church. And, if any of her own members do not walk according to the rules of the gospel, she excludes them from her communion, till they be purged from the scandal, according to the instituted discipline of the sanctuary. Is this to separate the privileges from the discipline of the church? And do they not deserve to come under the discipline of the church, before they are admitted to her privileges, who throw out insinuations, so ungenerous and unjust, against their Christian brethren?”\*

Such is a specimen of the mode in which this theological and sectarian warfare was waged. It would have required one with the potency and meekness of Moses to have sweetened the waters of strife. Had the men of that generation looked more to “the tree of life,” and less to old Scotch acts of parliament, there would have been less of contention about secondary matters. But the time was not yet.

Even amid these hostile attacks a new adversary against the Relief scheme appeared on the field. The Rev. David Walker, Burgher minister, Pollock, cautiously buckled on his armour for the battle. He was a very different person from Mr. Ramsay.

\* Animadversions on the Re-Exhibition, pp. 13, 14, 7, 9, 17, 21

He did not lay himself open by a rash assault. Though slow, he had a peculiar talent at seizing upon a concession or a flaw in the reasoning of his opponent, and pressing it, till he put him very awkwardly into a corner. Like Ramsay, he published two pamphlets, which were answered by Hutchison; but he always came in the rear of others, and fought with weapons which friends or foes had dropped, and cautiously wielded them to very good purpose in maintaining the great article of debate—the moral obligation of the covenants. He did all that could be done in a bad cause. He could not find the “Solemn League” in the New Testament, and far less its obligation upon posterity. He had only untempered mortar wherewith to build up his system, and Hutchison having got new views as to the Gospel church not being national, demolished his fabric of a national covenant by sapping its very foundation. No national church, no national covenant.

The list of pamphlets given in the Appendix will enable inquirers to judge for themselves, if they think fit to study a controversy which stirred up at the time the passions of thousands of religious professors, and the effects of which are still developing themselves in a great variety of ways.

Hutchison had the advantage of being the first person who had attempted, at any length, to portray the Relief system, and he very adroitly managed, in his controversial pamphlets, to give a prominence to Relief principles, while yet he was battling against all the other parties who were attacking them. Amid the pressure of his ministerial duties, he secured time to write and publish his volume on the nature of the ‘Messiah’s Kingdom’ even during the very hottest of the conflict. In it he went to the foundation of a Christian church, and showed how the Relief scheme of Church order and government agreed with the spiritual nature of the kingdom of Christ, while he held up the Secession, the Reformed Presbytery, and the Chapel-of-ease plan, as inconsistent with the scriptural nature of a Gospel church. From a glance at the contents of the chapters of his book, it is evident that he had read the ‘King of Martyrs’ by Glas, to whom belongs the honour of indoctrinating the minds of many Scotchmen, both of that and of the preceding generation, with right views of the spirituality of the gospel dispensation. Without farther reviving old controversies—which are now happily falling into oblivion, and which were overruled partially to benefit

both the Secession and Relief churches, enabling them to see, after the smoke and din of arms have ceased, that they are friends—we will rather, in the next chapter, select a few paragraphs from the writings of Hutchison, which show, without attacking others, what he understood by “the Relief system,” and how he defended it.

While the dissenters in Scotland were engaged in this civil war, ruining themselves, the Establishment had a sweet breathing time of peace. Under the vigorous hand of Robertson, it perfected its policy of acting in subordination to the law of patronage as a state church, and pointed to its quarrelling children as a strong reason why the people should keep within its pale. Its children, however, were fighting their way through darkness to a clearer sky.

The principal commotion raised within the church about this period, was in a different part of the country from that in which the Seceders and Relief had their strongholds. A new sect, in 1773, appeared in the district of country lying between Dundee and Aberdeen. At first it made very great progress. It was, however, a mere spring-tide popularity. It soon died away, and left those places dry which at first had been deeply flooded with its waters. They took to themselves the somewhat quaint scriptural title of “the Berean Church,” because, like the Bereans of old, they made their appeal to the Divine testimony, and searched the scriptures whether the doctrines which they heard from their teachers, as “truths,” were really so.\* In their peculiar designation, there quietly lurked a good deal of self-sufficiency, as if they were the only Christians who searched the Bible, and took their creed from its sacred pages.

The founder of the sect, was the Rev. John Barclay, a native of the parish of Muthil; and a man of great abilities and pungent eloquence. His indomitable temper, rather than his wishes and convictions, made him a dissenter, and though, after his exclusion from the Establishment, he was for a time a thorn in her side, yet his party have had little influence upon the religious state of Scotland. The want of a learned ministry has been to them very injurious.

He studied under Dr. Archibald Campbell, Professor of Church

\* Barclay's Life, by the Berean church, Edn., prefixed to his Essay on the Psalms with the Scotch version annexed, p. 5. Chalmers' Life of Barclay.—Thom's Preface to 'Without faith, without God.' London. 1836.



History, St. Andrews, and became an open and avowed partisan of his opinion, "that the knowledge of the existence of God was derived from revelation and not from nature." Dr. Campbell was publicly prosecuted for his heretical opinions, but after long litigation before the church courts, the matter was compromised or explained away. Mr. Barclay, along with other young men, became enamoured of the above maxim, as exalting the Bible, and laying a strong foundation for the necessity of revelation. He did not in his impetuosity stop to inquire how far the Bible itself recognises the light of nature, but at once pronounced and held the dogma—that reason could discover nothing in religion.

Both at Errol, where he was a short time assistant, and also at Fettercairn, where he was an assistant nine years, he gave considerable offence to his brethren in the ministry by the boldness and novelty of his views, while he commanded the attention and gained the hearts of his hearers by the energy of his intellectual character, and his pointed fervid oratory. At Fettercairn particularly, hearers flocked to him from ten or twelve parishes. The *rafters* which ran across the old church for supporting the roof, were crowded on Sabbath by persons sitting and clambering upon them. The sashes of the windows were removed to enable the multitude sitting without to hear his voice.

His system, in so far as it differed from that of the Establishment, and other evangelical dissenting denominations, consisted in his maintaining that the scripture was the *only source* of information about the existence of God; that every one who has grace given him to credit the divine testimony concerning Christ is assured of his salvation; that he has this assurance at all times; and that a man who doubts concerning his state in the sight of God is not a Christian.

He had also peculiar views about the Psalms, which sprang from his notion that faith was always connected with assurance and joy. If the Psalms of David were to be understood as descriptive in general of the feelings of David, who was "a man according to God's own heart," his theory was a delusion; for David was often in great mental anguish about his spiritual state. To get quit of this objection, he explained all the Psalms which spake of David as a weeping saint, as applying to Christ bearing the burden of his people's sins; and that He, and not David, was the sinner spoken of. What will not a theory compel even a clear-headed man to do?

To keep the people always in a state of religious joy, and to teach them to have the language of sacred melody upon their lips, he made a new version of the Psalms, and set them to the best song tunes, so that they might be always singing as believers even when employed at their daily labour. In this many will think he was cunning as a serpent, though they may also think it was not very discreet in him to attempt to unite an old love ditty with the songs of Zion.

All these things were carried on by him when he was assistant at Fettercairn. An attempt was made to libel him at the bar of the presbytery, but it failed, as his novelties were not condemned in the standards of the church, and as he was confessedly a cleverer man than any one of the Presbytery. They read from the pulpit a warning condemning his errors; but it served only as an excellent text for him to preach from and inflame the passions of his admiring audience.

When the aged incumbent died in 1772, the people were resolved to have Barclay as their minister. The Presbytery, however, excluded him from the pulpit, got the patron to present the Rev. Mr. Foote, of Eskdale-muir, whose call was only signed by six heritors belonging to the parish, and three of them were nonjurant Episcopalians. The parish carried the matter to the Assembly. Mr. Foote was violently intruded upon the parish. The Presbytery refused Mr. Barclay his certificate, and as he would not bow to their authority, he had no other resource left but to set up his tabernacle without the limits of the synagogue, which he was fain to enter. The whole Presbytery having failed to convict him of error, upon a regular libel, he would not cringe to them now, though they had got his feet in the trap. He had honesty not to recant principles which he had long conscientiously held and openly taught, while yet he was solicitous to get a certificate from those who did not believe them. In all this there was a strange mixture of honesty and inconsistency.

During his attempts to procure the parish of Fettercairn, he had preached occasionally in Edinburgh, and had secured many friends and admirers. His works from the press, advocating his notions, had been widely circulated and read. He soon became very popular. He formed a church in Edinburgh on the principles which he had always taught, and being ordained by some ministers at Newcastle, he returned and became its regular pastor.

His old flock at Fettercairn also built a church for him. About

twelve hundred of them left the Establishment. He declined their invitation, but guided them to the choice of a pastor holding the same opinions as himself. Barclay, in two or three years, went to London to disseminate his opinions. For nearly two years he continued to preach there, and in other towns in England. He established in the metropolis a weekly meeting for disputing with those who impugned his sentiments. Here, as in Scotland, he had considerable success. He organized several churches, and gained over several respectable persons whom he set apart as teachers. Divisions, however, soon sprang up where disputations were so much encouraged. The disciples were too often fiery and dogmatical like their master.

As long as he lived, he was principally engaged in watering the churches which he had planted, and by his presence, exhortations, and talents, he kept them in some degree of prosperity; but after his death, which took place very suddenly at Edinburgh, in 1798, they began to break up, and moulder away. Though churches were formed in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Crieff, Kirkcaldy, Dundee, Arbroath, Montrose, Brechin, Fettercain, and other places, yet the sect which promised at one time to be numerous has declined, and is mainly kept alive not ~~from~~ converts from without, but by hereditary descent from father to son.

The radical error in Barclay's views was what he regarded as a radical truth. Its foundation as a system was rotten. It is remarkable, that with all his acuteness he should have confounded things that are altogether different. His maxim was, that every man that doubted of his justification—since God had said, "He that believeth shall be saved"—was making God a liar. But certainly it is one thing to know that God is true, and speaks what is true, and quite another thing to know that I am a *true* believer. Yet these things he always confounded, and also very strangely maintained that the fruit of faith is no corroborative evidence to a man's own conscience, that he is in a justified state. Such high extravagant notions of assurance are not consistent with the nature of man. A fallible being can never be infallibly sure that he is right. A deceitful heart will lead man, from vanity and other motives, to deceive himself. Too many of Barclay's disciples lived to manifest to the world, if not to themselves, that they had been assuring their conscience of what was not true. In a few years, many who entered by the door of assurance went back to the world by the postern gate of sin. Every one that

the church cast out in the exercise of discipline, was a palpable proof to the church, that their doctrine of assurance was decidedly wrong.\*

Another fault in the Berean churches, was their not attending sufficiently to church order. Barclay had felt the smart of a presbyterian church court, and he had a hatred of church discipline, and considered it as calculated to make hypocrites rather than to purify and strengthen believers. His churches were, therefore, too much like a rope of sand, and at every agitation they fell into pieces. They had in them the seeds of dissolution; and in the course of sixty years, He who walks amid the seven golden candlesticks has, in a great measure, extinguished them, because they refused to shine.

\* 'Christ's Commission,' &c., M'Lean's Works, vol. i. p. 103. Ed. 1823.



## CHAPTER XV.

### RELIEF PRINCIPLES—THEIR AGREEMENT AND DISAGREEMENT WITH THOSE OF OTHER RELIGIOUS DENOMINATIONS.

IN his pamphlets, Mr. Hutchison mentions a variety of points on which the Relief and Secession churches harmonized; and in several of which they also harmonized with the Establishment. It is to be regretted that these things, in the heat of the controversy between the Secession and Relief, did not occupy a more prominent place, as they would have served to convince the disputants that, after all, it was a war amongst brethren. The points of disagreement were few and insignificant, when compared with those in which they were agreed.

1. They were at one on the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, for they taught the same evangelical system of salvation by grace. 2. They maintained the same Presbyterian form of church-government. 3. At the ordination of their ministers they both solemnly acknowledged the same Westminster Confession as the confession of their faith. 4. Both the Relief and Secession churches held that Christian congregations had a right to choose their own ministers, and detested the Antichristian and abominable practice of intruding ministers by patronage and otherwise, upon reluctant congregations.\*

Besides these main points of agreement, condescended on by Hutchison, the Relief and Secession were also, he said, agreed "That it was unlawful to hear legal and unsound preachers, —who overturn, in their discourses, the great gospel doctrines of particular election, the imputation of Adam's sin, the general corruption of human nature, the freedom of the gospel offer, the imputation of the sins of the elect to Christ, the imputation of his righteousness to them, regeneration by his Spirit,

\* View of Relief System, Part iii. p. 4.

the perseverance of the saints, or such like essential doctrines of the Christian system—as they do not preach the gospel, and have no title to be heard. And farther, the Seceders and Relief are agreed, that it is unlawful and sinful to hear intruders, who have violently thrust themselves into particular charges in the church of Christ. Such have not entered in by Christ, the door, into the sheepfold, by the way of his appointment, viz., the *Call* and invitation of the flock, but have climbed up some other way by virtue of a *presentation* to the legal benefice; and, by doing so, have at once robbed Christ of his authority, and his people of their liberty.”\*

On these, and many other lesser points, the Relief and Secession churches were agreed; and though they differed a little in their views of some portions of their standards, as to the power of the civil magistrate in religion and the terms of communion, yet it is to be regretted that there was not more mutual forbearance. The smaller the points of discrepancy, the fiercer usually is the warfare. It requires a sharp edge to split hairs.

The general outlines of the Relief scheme being Calvinistic and Presbyterian, according to the well-known Westminster Confession, its peculiarities as a dissenting church must be sought for in the writings of its Fathers, and gathered from its decisions in its church courts; and these will be found mainly to refer to the outward economy of the church of Christ. Accordingly Hutchison, in his ‘Messiah’s Kingdom,’ treats of the church as an organized society, and shows how it differs in its organization from the kingdoms of this world, and then applies his principles as descriptive of the principles of the Relief church. This is the general drift of his publication. The question at issue is, how does the Relief church, with all its laws and office-bearers, ordinances and members, stand in reference to Christ as its King, whose kingdom is distinct from all earthly kingdoms, and entirely of a spiritual nature? A few extracts from his publications, on these points, divesting them as much as possible of a controversial bearing, by selecting abstract statements where they can be hit on, though it may not always be possible, will give a somewhat clear and connected view of Relief principles, and of the constitution of the Relief church. Speaking for himself and his brethren, Hutchison lays down, amongst others, the following axioms,

\* View of Relief System, Part iii. p. 22.

which are here arranged and numbered for the sake of distinctness :—

I. In the kingdom of the Messiah, all power and authority originate from himself. He is the King, Lawgiver, and Judge of his church. “The sole power of legislation being lodged in the person of the Prince, he has, by his own authority, instituted and framed the whole policy, system of laws, form and order of government, in his kingdom. All men, to whom the constitution of this kingdom is made known, by the gospel, are generously invited to become the subjects of it; but, by coming into this kingdom, they acquire no power to alter the constitution, which is established by the authority of the Sovereign.”\*

II. The church of Christ is entirely distinct from the kingdoms of this world, and no civil magistrate has any right to interfere with it, or to attempt to establish it. “The kingdom of Christ and the kingdoms of this world are perfectly distinct from one another, as, in the former, all power and authority originate from the Prince; but, in the latter, all power and authority originate from the community. In settling the boundaries between the kingdom of Christ and the worldly kingdoms, we remark that the one may not invade the property of the other, nor go beyond its proper limits. As, in worldly kingdoms, there are certain limits, to which they extend, and what is beyond these belongs to other kingdoms, and is under another government and jurisdiction; so there are certain boundaries between the kingdom of Christ and the worldly kingdoms, which, if the rulers and princes of the world go beyond, they invade a kingdom not their own, and trouble the dominions and subjects of another prince. And attempts of this nature have been often very prejudicial both to the kingdom of Christ, and the worldly kingdoms themselves. These unhappy attempts have been either owing to ignorance of the proper boundaries between these very different kingdoms, or (what is worse) to a disposition not to observe them.”†

“None have a right to usurp dominion over the faith and consciences of men. The inspired apostles themselves claimed no such power over Christians in their day. These venerable, holy men inculcated the rights of conscience and private judgment in their excellent writings, and sacredly observed them in their prac-

\* Mess. Kingd., p. 81

† Ibid., p. 177.

tice. It is every man's duty to search the scriptures for himself, to learn from them the mind of Christ, for his own salvation, and not to receive implicitly the doctrines which men teach, or the creed of the civil magistrate. The meanest subject in the state has as good a right to judge in matters of religion, for himself, as the prince on the throne. The civil magistrate has no more right to dictate a religious creed to his subjects than they have a right to dictate a religious creed to him. By being placed at the head of the civil state, to give law to the subjects of the state, he is not therefore placed at the head of the church, to give law to the body of Christ. If ever he assumes this character and power, he transgresses the just limits of his authority, which is civil, not religious; invades the dominions of another prince; and arrogantly claims the power of giving laws to a community, that knows, and ought to know, no king but Jesus. This is a stretch of prerogative as unreasonable and absurd, as it would be for the French king to pretend to give law to the British subjects, or for the king of Britain to assume the power of prescribing laws to the subjects of a foreign prince."\*

"The New Testament Zion is not to be built by carnal policy and power, but by the Spirit of the Lord. The truths of the gospel will make their way in the world, by their own internal beauty, excellence, and importance, and the energy of the Spirit of grace attending them, without the absurd, irrational, and heterogeneous power of the sword, would men only learn the wisdom, to suffer the kingdom of Christ to remain distinct from the worldly kingdoms, and fight its battles by weapons that are not carnal, but spiritual like itself. That church-state, or establishment of religion, which is constituted by human authority, or cannot consist without it, is not from Christ; it is not his kingdom, nor has the least connection with it. It is only a worldly kingdom, or political constitution, framed and established by church and state-politicians, which Messiah the Prince will never acknowledge for his kingdom; for his kingdom he has established himself to stand through all ages, and has not left it to be framed and constituted by states or churches."†

"Earthly kings may be nursing fathers, and their queens nursing mothers to the church, without interfering with the rights of her members. By their own example they may recommend reli-

\* Mess. Kingd., pp. 178, 179.

† Ibid., p. 195.



gion to their subjects. They may exert their influence in promoting the interest of Christ's kingdom a great variety of ways, without abridging the rights of conscience, and private judgment, in matters of religion. They may encourage piety, by promoting good men to offices in the state, and withholding them from bad men. They may be fathers to their people, and guardians of their religious and civil liberties, by preserving church and state from foreign enemies, and not suffering one part of their subjects to oppress and disturb the rest, in the quiet and peaceable possession of their rights, as men and as Christians. But, if they countenance one part of their subjects, in harassing and distressing the rest, as was too much the case in the cruel state-uniformities of the last century, they are rather tyrants, than nursing fathers and mothers to the church, as they invade the sacred prerogative of Christ, and the rights of his people. And every such invasion is a step towards the overturning of their throne. Mild and lenient governments are generally secure and peaceable.—The law of Christ commands all the subjects of his kingdom to be subject to every ordinance of man. By which is meant, a cheerful and ready obedience to all those ordinances of the civil magistrate, that are of a lawful nature, fall within his jurisdiction as the head of the state, and do not interfere with their rights as Christians, and members of the church of Christ. While their consciences are to be kept sacred to the Lord of hosts, their bodies, services, and worldly goods, are subjected to the temporal prince. They must support his person and government, and give him all due respect and honour, as the supreme head of the state, by paying taxations, engaging in lawful war, and performing all other duties obligatory upon them, as subjects of the worldly kingdom. And all the lawful commands of the civil magistrate they must obey, from conscience, and from a conviction that it is the will of the great Christian Lawgiver that they should do so, and not merely from fear of outward punishment, in their persons or substance, if they do not.”\*

III. The church is an entirely voluntary society. “The Israelitish church, established in Palestine, was not a voluntary society, but the Christian church is. The Israelites were not left at liberty, whether they were to adhere to the Jewish religion or not. They were obliged to profess the true religion,

\* Mess. Kingd., pp. 189, 180

and worship of God, established in Canaan; and such as apostatized to the worship of false gods were to be destroyed, by the express appointment of the great Head of the theocracy. No strange god was to be set up among them, in that peculiar spot of earth where he had established his own worship. The Jewish church, however, was a voluntary society with respect to proselytes from Gentilism. None of the Gentiles were to be forced to profess the Jewish religion like native Israelites. But such of them as became willing converts to it were to be received. And this is the case with Christ's New Testament kingdom; it is a voluntary society, consisting of men of all nations, kindreds, and tongues, who, by their own consent and choice, enter into it. The gospel church has its gates open to receive all who voluntarily enter into it. Christianity proposes blessings unto men, great in their number, precious in their nature, durable as eternity, and with a divine freedom; but it punishes none, in the outward man, for not becoming its votaries. Its language, alluring and awful to all that hear it, is, 'He that believeth shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned.' It exhibits every thing amiable, beneficial, and excellent, to captivate the hearts of men, and make them its votaries by their own consent. And it denounces endless misery, in the future life, to all who will not embrace it. But it requires no man to profess it contrary to his own inclinations. It recommends itself to the esteem and approbation of mankind by its own internal light and evidence, its amiable excellencies, and that numerous train of blessings, temporal and eternal, which it brings along with it; for it has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come; and if it is despised, it leaves men to the mournful consequences of their own folly and unbelief. But it rejects the absurd aid of the civil sword; nor is it so rude and uncourteous as to force itself upon men by civil penalties, in a greater or less degree. Such things are not the weapons of its warfare. Such carnal weapons are excellently adapted to the carnal and worldly genius of the Mahometan and antichristian kingdom; but in Messiah's kingdom they are unknown; it neither needs them nor can admit them, nor have its interests ever been promoted by them." \*

IV. In opposition to the intolerant scheme of principles embo-

\* Mess. Kingd., pp. 171, 172.

died in the National Covenant, Solemn League, and the standards of those churches founded on them, "the Relief ministers maintain that it is unlawful, under the gospel, to force even the true religion upon men by civil pains and penalties, contrary to their inward conviction, and that all such methods of enforcing religion are prejudicial to it, and inconsistent with that liberty wherewith Christ hath made the New Testament worshippers free.—The arguments in favour of state uniformities in religion under the gospel, without toleration to those who differ from the national creed and profession, as was the case with the solemn league uniformity, and also with the national covenant of Scotland, have been generally brought from the peculiar kingdom and commonwealth of Israel, while some very important distinctions between that commonwealth and the nature of the gospel kingdom, have not been attended to."—"Under the gospel dispensation, no nation receives its system of civil laws from God as the Israelites did, nor is any nation under heaven bound to observe those civil and judicial statutes which God gave to his people Israel, except so far as any of them were of a moral nature."—"That uniformity in religion, which was to be enforced by civil pains in that peculiar kingdom, respected the Israelites only, and is grossly abused when it is made a precedent for any uniformity of a similar kind under the Christian dispensation; unless it can be shown, from the word of God, that there is a Christian commonwealth constituted upon the same foundation with that of ancient Israel, which never hitherto has been proved, and, I am strongly apprehensive, never will be to the end of the world: And, had the proper distinctions between the Israelitish and evangelical state of things been well understood and observed, the British history never would have been stained with accounts of uniformities in religion enforced by civil pains, either to Presbytery, Prelacy, or Popery; and men would have learned to promote the kingdom of Christ, which is, in its nature, spiritual and heavenly, by such spiritual weapons as the venerable apostles of the Lamb used in their day, and not by such carnal weapons as the pains of the state and punishments of the outward man.

"Our pious ancestors, in the last century, discovered great zeal for the true religion; but their great error was, that they were for forcing their own religious creed upon their fellow-subjects, by the power and sword of the civil magistrate; so that, while they were earnestly contending against Popery in the gross,

they were unhappily contending for the very worst branch, either in the Romish or pagan religions, viz. a system of persecution for conscience' sake. That uniformity in religion, which, in that age, they wanted to effect, as far as it imposed a profession of the true religion, by civil punishments, upon any, contrary to their inward conviction, was wrong, and the very same, as to its essence, nature, and tendency, with the other uniformities enforced by civil pains to Popery and Prelacy, under the successive reigns of Mary and Elizabeth. The truth is, in that age of civil uniformities in religion, persecution and arbitrary power did not change its nature, but only shifted from one side to another, according as Presbyterians, Episcopalians, or Papists, had the power and authority of state on their side. The serpent was the serpent still, though it put on a variety of colours, appeared in very different shapes, and assumed different names. When arbitrary power was employed to propagate Popery or Episcopacy, the Presbyterians viewed the monster in a proper light, and called it persecution; but when employed to propagate their own scheme, the unhallowed thing was sanctified, and received the venerable name of Reformation. Pity that so diabolical a thing should receive so good a name!" \*

V. That the Confession of Faith is faulty in not discriminating accurately between the kingdom of Christ and the kingdoms of this world. "The Confession of Faith and Catechisms, composed by the venerable Westminster Assembly, contain a more complete collection of divine truths than any books of human composure I have ever seen: and, in my judgment, the Shorter Catechism is the most masterly, comprehensive, and judicious production of that venerable convention of divines. It contains a collection of divine truths so compendious, just, comprehensive, and well-connected, as is scarcely to be equalled in any human performance. But after all, that venerable assembly were not without their weaknesses and mistakes; and, indeed, they would have been more than men if they had been free from them. Perfection, in a state of imperfection, is not to be expected. The distinctions between the kingdom of Christ and the kingdoms of this world, and the right of private judgment in matters of religion, they did not well understand: and with all deference to these great men, I am humbly of opinion, that their views of

\* View, part iii. pp. 8, 9, 10, 12, 13.



religious covenanting were very erroneous, and also the methods of propagating the covenanted uniformity of religion in that age by civil pains.”—“ Unhappily they seemed disposed to break up communion, in the sacred rites of religion, with many who were not equally enlightened with themselves: and what was still worse, they wanted to compel less enlightened Christians to profess the same articles of faith with themselves, by all civil pains, without conviction of their truth, which was a branch of Popery from which Protestant reformers themselves needed to be reformed. This shows that the best churches, like the moon, are not without spots, and that our religious predecessors, however eminent for knowledge in other respects, were very ignorant of the scriptural conditions of church-fellowship, and the sacred right of private judgment in matters of religion: and some denominations of Protestant dissenters, especially in Scotland, having adopted the same plan, are chargeable with the same unhappy mistakes: and they seem to have been led into them by a superstitious regard for the characters of men; but none ought to be followed farther than they follow Christ. This fixes the limits of our duty in imitating others, and going forward by the footsteps of the flock.” \*

VI. The government which Christ has appointed in his church in its great outlines, is Presbyterian. The election of office-bearers is in the members, their ordination is by the presbytery, and their power is ministerial. “ The Messiah the Prince hath appointed the different orders of men who are to bear office in this kingdom. Some of these were extraordinary, as prophets, apostles, and evangelists. These were necessary for opening the Christian dispensation, and establishing the New Testament kingdom, and then their offices were to expire. Others were ordinary and standing office-bearers in the church, as pastors and teachers, governments, or ruling elders, and deacons, where they are necessary, for serving tables, and conducting, in a proper manner, the secular affairs of the church. These ordinary office-bearers are to be continued, in the church, to the end of the world. No other office-bearers are of divine institution. The various orders of men, in the church of Rome and the Episcopal church, are unknown in the kingdom of Christ, and are not constituted by divine, but by human authority. The way in which

\* Mess. Kingd., pp, 115, 116, 17, 18.

the office-bearers of this kingdom are to be installed in their office, is by election and ordination. Their election belongs to the members of the church, or the visible subjects of this kingdom. This is evident from the election of an apostle to supply the place of Judas, by the hundred and twenty disciples. It is evident from the election of the first deacons by the multitude; and from the instalment of presbyters, teaching and ruling after the multitude had chosen them by the stretching out of hands. All these instances of popular elections are recorded in scripture for the imitation of the church of Christ in after ages, and to point out the scriptural manner in which the office-bearers in Messiah's kingdom are to be chosen to the end of the world. And after they have been chosen in a regular scriptural manner, they are to be ordained or put into office by the presbytery or rulers of the church. Messiah hath not left the government of his church in an ambulatory condition, to be one time Presbyterian, another Independent, a third Episcopalian. But the first of these, especially as to the great lines of it, was evidently observed in the constitution and practice of the first Christian churches, and is therefore to be observed in the church in all ages. And it is also more agreeable to reason and common sense than any other form of ecclesiastical polity."—"Their power (if they could be brought to understand and not to exceed it) is not legislative, but ministerial. They have no power to give law to Christ's subjects. They have only an executive power committed to them, of executing the laws and dispensing the ordinances of his appointment. In respect of public teaching in the church of God, they are not at liberty to teach what they think proper, but what Messiah hath commanded them. And, in governing the church, they are not to do it by laws of their own framing, but by a conscientious observance of the laws of his appointment."\*

VII. The terms of communion, or the scriptural conditions of admission to Baptism and the Lord's Supper, the seals of the covenant, "are the *reality* of saintship, and the *visibility* of it. By the first, men are entitled to the seals of the covenant, in the sight of God, and, by the second, in the eye of the church. As the church is to judge of men by their fruits or outward appearance, she may lawfully admit the vilest of men to her communion, if they are visible saints, and maintain a fair outward profession and

\* Mess. Kingd., pp. 27, 28, 30.

deportment; as their real, internal character is concealed from her view, and does not come under her rule of judgment. And, if she presumes to refuse the seals of the covenant to visible saints, she is equally guilty of mal-administration, as if she dispensed them to visible sinners. Her latitudinarianism, or deviation from the scriptural rule of judging, is equally great, when she shuts the door of her communion against those, who appear to be the children of God, by exhibiting the fruits of the Spirit to view, in a holy practice, as if she opened the door of her communion to the openly immoral and profane. It were to be wished those would attend to this who confine their communion to the votaries of their own party, and boldly exclude many precious saints in the sight of God, and visibly so before the world.\*

“On the subject of communion, it is of importance to inquire whose table the sacramental table is? This is a question so plain, that a child of eight years old could answer it, and yet its import is unknown to thousands arrived at the state of manhood. It is a mean, unworthy prostitution of this solemn ordinance of our religion to call it the table of a party. It is the Lord’s table. For whom is this table covered by the generous entertainer? Is it covered for Burghers, or Antiburghers? for church-people, or Relief-people? for Independents or Episcopalians as such? No: For whom then? For the children of God, not as they belong to any particular denomination of professors, but as they are his children, in reality, and appear to be so, by their deportment. It is the most daring presumption in any to deny the children’s bread to the children of God.”†

VIII. The Relief church is opposed to the duty of national covenanting as being of a moral and religious nature. Speaking with pointed precision on this subject, Mr. Hutchison says, “After the most serious attention to this subject, and viewing it in different lights, I am clearly of opinion, that the national covenant, sworn several times by the Israelites, was not a moral, but a positive ordinance, binding upon the Israelites only, and ceased, in respect of its obligation, as a standing ordinance in the church, at the death of Christ, when the ancient Jewish commonwealth was dissolved, and the entire system of positive institutions, peculiar to the Israelitish nation, was abrogated.—No argument can, therefore, be brought from the national covenant of Israel, for national

\* Mess. Kingd., p. 29.

† View, p. 73.

oaths and covenants under the gospel, unless it can be proved, that what was positive and political in the Israelitish system of government, is adopted into the gospel-system, which those that can may try.

“I readily grant, that it is the duty of all men, to whom the gospel is made known, to enter into God’s covenant of grace, by believing in his Son, and to yield a cheerful obedience to his laws. And, if nothing is pled for, as national covenanting under the gospel, but this, I have no objections to it, but cordially wish that all the kingdoms of this world would, in this manner, become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ. But many plead, that it is a moral duty, under the gospel, to swear religious oaths and covenants literally, as the Israelites did. This kind of covenanting I cannot see to be either a moral or positive duty, under Christianity.”—“Swearing of public religious oaths was never observed by good men in all the ages of the world, before the constitution of the church of Israel; no such oaths were sworn by the Saviour, by his apostles, or the primitive churches planted by them. In the New Testament there is a total silence about swearing religious oaths. Such arguments against the moral obligation of public religious oaths appear very strong and convincing to me, and I doubt not but they will appear in the same light to all dispassionate, unprejudiced men, who wish to have their judgment determined in this controversy, by clear and conclusive arguments from scripture and right reason, and not by an implicit belief of the dictates and practices of men.”

“Are the Covenants, National, and Solemn League binding upon us the posterity of those who swore them? I answer, All those religious truths and duties sworn to in these covenants, are binding upon us, by divine authority, enjoining these to be believed and obeyed; but they are not binding upon us because our forefathers swore them. Their deed and act of swearing laid no new obligation on themselves to believe and obey scriptural truths and duties, nor does it lay any new obligation upon us. We are under the highest obligation to believe and obey the whole system of revealed religion, because God has revealed it, as the rule of our faith and obedience. We are obliged to receive every divine truth, because God has revealed it, and not because our predecessors swore it.”

“As far as the matter of these national oaths were things in which men are left at liberty by the law of God, they



were binding only upon those who swore them; but not upon their descendants any farther than they think proper to acquiesce in the deeds of their fathers, and to take their obligations in things indifferent upon themselves. The reason of this is obvious; because, though men may abridge their own natural liberty by oaths, where the divine law leaves them at freedom, yet they have no right to abridge the natural liberty of their posterity. Posterity, indeed, may do this themselves, by acquiescing in the deed of their fathers, or, by their own oaths, bring themselves under new obligations in these matters."

"And, as far as any part of the matter of these national oaths was contrary to the law of God, so far they had no obligations, and so far it was a sin to swear them, and a greater sin to keep them; as it was with respect to the oath against Paul's life by a numerous band of conspirators."

"I am so far from thinking that it is any real loss to religion that no such oaths are now required of the British subjects, by the united authority of church and state, as in the last century, that I esteem it a real blessing to these nations and the interest of religion, that these national oaths are now laid aside. Instead of making this a ground of humiliation, as some weak, ignorant people do, I rather esteem it ground of mourning and humiliation before God, that so many in these lands swore these oaths, in which there were sundry things unlawful to be sworn, and other things which not one-hundred of the whole British subjects sufficiently understood. After the closest attention to the national oaths of the last century, imposed upon the subjects of these kingdoms, I ingenuously declare, that I do not think that ever any part of the church of Christ, since the commencement of the Christian era, was more deeply involved in the guilt of ignorant and false swearing, than the British subjects in the last century."

"National bonds and confederacies, however, may be entered into—when they are political, and no part of religious worship—when persons enter into them by consent and choice, and not by force and constraint,—and when the matter of the league is consistent with the civil and religious liberties of men; and I rejoice to see the eyes of the nation beginning to discover the propriety of forming such political confederacies, when they are necessary, without interfering with the religious or civil liberties of one another. Were the inhabitants of Scotland to

enter into political combinations of this kind with prudence, spirit, and unanimity, in circumstances of great national danger and distress, the nation would stand forth with energy, and appear a formidable body against its oppressors. But, when one party in the nation will force all the rest into their religious creed, as was the case in the last century, the kingdom is divided against itself, it has an internal consumption in itself, and has little power to oppose the lawless depredations of its oppressors.”\*

In consistency with the tenor of these refreshing extracts, Mr. Hutchison in practice was far from being of a sectarian spirit. Both he and his brethren entertaining like comprehensive principles, looked forward to the time when they might even “fall back into the bosom of the Church of Scotland, when her ministers shall be found preaching the pure and uncorrupted doctrines of the gospel, and *asserting the liberties of Christians.*”† With this saving proviso all will agree; but when shall that time come when the Church of Scotland shall be found “asserting the liberties of Christians,” as laid down by Hutchison, the expounder of the principles of the Relief synod? When she places herself as at her commencement, where Christ has placed his church, on the foundation of the prophets and apostles, and not on the enactments of men.

His mind evidently looked farther than such a partial union. Though he was fighting the battle amid dust, smoke, and pointed arrows, he was convinced that sweet peace would come out of confusion, and that the Secession, Relief, and other churches, would likely unite after the controversy of that period had spent its force. In the prospect of this his heart was filled with gladness. “I would rejoice to see Britain, yea, all Christendom,” says he, “happily united, by a free consent of heart, in a joint profession of the whole system of divine truths. An uniformity of this kind would be as agreeable to the genius of Messiah’s kingdom, as uniformities, enforced by the pains of the state, are contrary to it, and barbarous and antichristian in their own nature. The word of God gives us reason to hope, that an uniformity of religious sentiments will take place, among the professors of Christianity, in a very eminent degree, in a future, glorious period of the church; but whether it will ever be perfect in her militant condition is not for me to determine; the day will

\* Mess. Kingd., pp. 84, 95, 96, 115, 119, 121, 141, 142, 145, 146.

† View, part ii. p. 8.

declare it, and the process of the divine economy will make it manifest. Though it is a task too high and arduous for any to enumerate all the diversified ways and methods which the great Ruler of the nations may see proper to observe, in introducing the light and glory of the latter days, and all the circumstances which may concur to the introduction and establishment of that future and illustrious state of his kingdom; yet to me it is not improbable, that the present struggles and collisions among different denominations of Christians, and men of different views, interests, and passions, some contending for truth and some against it, may, by the overruling care of Providence, illustrate and ascertain many truths, and happily pave the way for that more enlightened and perfect state of the church. Such conflicts and struggles have tended to the confirmation and establishment of the truth in past ages, and they may do so in the generations to come. And if this should be the effect of present controversies and contentions among Christians, sweetness will spring out of bitterness, light arise out of darkness, and great and valuable ends will be attained by the present multiplied divisions and controversies in the church of God, which are otherwise very afflicting and disagreeable in themselves. Meanwhile it is the unalienable right of Christians to judge for themselves in matters of religion. And to claim the power of dictating to others, in matters of faith, and to punish them for noncompliance, savours more of the haughty and overbearing spirit of the infallible see, than of the humble and self-denied spirit of the gospel. As far as any body of men pretend to dictate to others, in matters of religion, and to force them to profess their sentiments, so far they are Papists, and not Protestants, whatever they pretend, and by whatever religious name they call themselves. Names are of small importance, it is the principles and spirit of Popery that are Popery. And while persecuting principles and a persecuting spirit are held fast, men may glory in the venerable name of Protestant, while the very essence of Popery lurks under it. How desirable were it, if all the Protestant churches, who have renounced the name of Popery, would renounce its spirit and its anti-toleration and oppressive principles also; and that none of the dregs of this abomination were found among them! May he, that sits as a refiner, and has his furnace in Jerusalem, purify the Protestant churches from all dross and pollution, and strengthen in them the things that remain and are ready to die!" \*

\* Mess. Kingd., pp. 175, 176, 177.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### EXCLUSION OF COWAN—DEATH OF GILLESPIE—CONSEQUENCES OF THE SCHISM OVERTURE—BELL COMES TO GLASGOW.

AT the meeting of synod 1773, a majority of the managers of the Colingsburgh congregation preferred through the Glasgow presbytery, to which that church still belonged, several charges against Mr. Cowan. He had excluded from a seat in his session an elder, who would not adopt his sectarian principles of communion. The synod appointed a committee of their number to meet at Colingsburgh on the 16th June, and investigate the matter. The great majority of the congregation were naturally on the side of their minister, and being guided by Mr. Alexander Scott, the clerk of the congregation, who was acquainted by profession with the legal steps which were requisite to strengthen their cause, he took the necessary means both to enlist the sympathies of the people, and to strengthen their claims on the property of the church. As the annual election of managers took place prior to the day when the committee of synod were appointed to meet, care was taken that the old managers, who were friendly to the synod and opposed to Mr. Cowan, should not be re-elected, and new ones, holding different principles, were inducted into office. A supplementary bond was also drawn up by Mr. Scott, and the people were got to subscribe it, thereby making themselves joint proprietors with the original contributors to the stock of the society; and thus, by a great influx of new members into the proprietary of the church, the old proprietors were completely swamped, and the minister and his friends became the governing party in the congregation. They were now prepared to give the committee of synod a vigorous and united opposition.

When the day of meeting arrived, Mr. Cowan kept himself out of the way. He had gone to Dunfermline to assist at the dispensation of the Lord's supper, and, in a cowardly manner, he did not



return to meet his brethren, who had come some of them from a great distance to examine into the truth of the complaints which were made against him. A story had been trumpeted abroad that the people were to be deprived of their church. "All the doors and windows of the meeting-house were therefore made fast within, and then sealed with paper and wax without." The whole congregation, men and women, were collected to guard the church, and continued to surround it during both day and night. The justices were warned to be in readiness to grant warrants to apprehend every person that should violently enter into the meeting-house. All such transgressors were to be carried prisoners to Cupar, and tried before the sheriff. Spies were also planted in proper places, to communicate information to the excited multitude when the ministers should come to town. In the midst of all this excitement and preparation, which more resembled fortifying a city against a deadly foe than anything else, the deputation of the synod made their appearance; and truly, they were neither formidable for number, nor for bodily strength. The three ministers who came were the Rev. Messrs. Baine, Bell, and Bonnar. Scarcely had they entered the village when Mr. Scott, the new managers, and most of the elders, appeared before them, and read a protest against their entering their meeting-house, or interfering with their minister, on pain of their being apprehended, brought before proper judges, and suffering the penalties of law. The synod, they said, had adopted Presbyterian, Independent, and Episcopal principles, to which they would not submit.

Having read their protest in presence of the ministers, the deputation from the congregation refused to hold any farther intercourse with them,—“took off their hats, bade them farewell, and returned to their place of meeting.” The committee of synod, however, proceeded to precognosce a number of witnesses as to the charges brought against Mr. Cowan, and next day left Colingsburgh, after a very unsatisfactory visit.

On giving in their report to the synod 1774, it was judged proper to attempt to hold another conference with Mr. Cowan, who had not come up to synod, and, instead of going to Colingsburgh, he was to be invited to meet them at Nether Largo. This he also shyed. He was summoned to attend the meeting of synod in 1775. But this he also resisted. As Mr. Cowan thus stubbornly refused to have any intereourse with those church courts, to which he had promised submission, and

would not even appear and meet his accusers face to face, the synod proceeded that year, with much reluctance, to pronounce a sentence of exclusion upon him, declaring him no longer of the Relief body, "and prohibited all ministerial intercourse with him."

This was the first act of discipline exercised by the Relief synod upon one of their number, and it led to the separation of a church from the body which continued disunited, till it crumbled into dust. It is easier to separate than unite.

As the history of this church is a little singular, it may be as well to finish it, even though there is a slight anticipation of events which will afterwards fall to be adverted to in a subsequent section. Mr. Cowan had a brother (Robert Cowan) who was a preacher in connection with the synod, who assisted him at his first sacrament, and thereby dropped connection with the synod. Robert afterwards went into England, and was first located among the Presbyterian dissenters in Berwick-on-Tweed, and subsequently at Newcastle-on-Tyne. It is not known what denomination he connected himself with, but they must have been dissenters from principle, for the sermon preached at his ordination was published at the request of the congregation, and in it Mr. Cruickshank, who officiated, says,—“By the voluntary contributions of the saints, even the whole Christian pastors were supported for upwards of three centuries, when Constantine, out of a mistaken zeal for Christianity, advanced the gospel ministers to secular honours, dignities, and preferments. Hence sprang that ambition and dictatorial spirit which has ever since too much disgraced their character, and too generally prevailed among many of its members.”\*

At Colingsburgh, Mr. Cowan endeavoured to set up a party, under the designation of “the first constituted Presbytery of Relief,” and though he did license one or two individuals when his brother came down from England to assist him at his sacraments, he never could form anything like a regular presbytery. He made an attempt about 1790 to get his people to join the Establishment, and strove to convert his meeting-house into a chapel-of-ease. The project, however, did not find favour in the eyes of his people. Their desire was rather to renew their connection with their old friends—the synod of Relief. Accordingly, a friendly intercourse was opened up between them and the synod.

\* A Ministerial Charge, p. 28. Edin. 1775.

Explanations were kindly afforded about Relief terms of communion—the deliverance of synod at its consultative meeting in 1772, and the explanation thereof in 1774, which had given offence to the Colingsburgh congregation, were rescinded, and the Relief terms of communion were declared to be contained in the xxvi. chapter of the Confession of Faith. In all this there was nothing new, for the synod had done the same in 1774. Besides, the synod still retained their general overture of 1773 on their records, which recognises the principle of free communion with all visible saints,—Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and Independents. The object seems to have been to remove from their minutes everything which might be *personally* offensive to Mr. Cowan or his people, without surrendering those opinions of catholic communion which they had always held as a religious denomination. These things took place at the synod 1792, and accordingly, in 1793, Mr. Cowan and his congregation endeavoured to have their connection renewed formally with it. The attempt proved unsuccessful. Mr. Alexander Scott, who had at first *being* the staunch friend of Mr. Cowan, and who had braved the committee of synod, was now alienated from his minister. He and a great many others had withdrawn from public ordinances in 1791, mainly on the ground that Mr. Cowan was not of a blameless reputation. The Rev. Mr. Paterson of Largo, also in synod expressed himself dissatisfied with his moral character. “The synod agreed without a vote to dismiss the petition as it now stands, finding that it would not answer the great purpose of edification, were the congregation of Colingsburgh to be readmitted with Mr. Cowan as their minister.”\*

The consequence of this decision was, that the congregation divided into two parties—one for Mr. Cowan, and another for the synod. As they were not likely to coalesce, the synod received their adherents as a forming Relief congregation. These constituted hereafter the Relief church, Colingsburgh. Opposition made the other party cleave more closely to Mr. Cowan, and they were by far the more numerous of the two. The synodical section, however, contained more of the original subscribers than the other, and they raised an action in law to get possession of the church. The process was continued for years before the sheriff of Fife and the Court of Session, and each party got inter-

\* Synod Records.

locutors at different times in its favour. At last the process fell asleep from a lack of funds to keep it alive, and also because the party which belonged to the synod built a church for themselves, and had no use for the original house. The case turned chiefly upon the terms of the constitution of the church, which were not very clearly expressed, and also upon the force of the supplemental bond, drawn out by Mr. Scott, to set the synod at defiance. In the revolution of events, the very same parties that resorted to this cunning measure afterwards wished it declared illegal, and found great difficulty in doing so. They were snared by their own device.

The sentence of synod was no doubt a sad shock to Mr. Cowan. Certainly they should not have done all but open the door for his return, and yet at the last have coolly shut it in his face. It is generally allowed by the older members of synod that the affair was badly managed. Soon after, Mr. Cowan's health began rapidly to decline. He had never altogether recovered from a medical operation which he underwent some years before. During the summer of 1794, his general debility of constitution assumed the form of violent disease. He lingered for some months occasionally convalescent, and again relapsing into a poor state of health. He continued preaching almost to the last. On the 15th April, 1795, he was gently released from all his labours.

About a year before his death the synod of Relief had deposed Mr. D. Gellatly, Haddington, "for gross acts of immorality, and endeavouring to convert his church into a chapel-of-ease." His conduct had been most offensive to Christian morals. Being a man, however, of excellent talents, and a popular preacher, withal cunning, bold, and unprincipled, he refused to submit, continued to preach, and was received into connection with the two Cowans. Mr. Gellatly could make himself feared if not respected. He instantly commenced a war from the press against the '*Strutherites*,' as he sarcastically called them, because Mr. James Struthers, College-street, had carried forward the libel against him. With no small degree of dexterity and dishonesty he set about writing and publishing what he called 'The History and Principles of the First Constituted Presbytery of Relief, founded in consequence of the Law of Patronage, by the late Rev. Messrs. Gillespie and Boston. By the surviving Members of said Presbytery. Edin., 1795.' In this pamphlet he endeavours to represent Messrs.



Gillespie, Cruden, and Cowan, as forming a presbytery by themselves, though before Cowan was intercommuned by the synod, Gillespie was dead, and Cruden had gone to London. The whole pamphlet is a perversion of Relief principles,—a virulent attack upon the synod, a defence of himself and of his continuing to preach after deposition; and yet it has often been quoted as a genuine history of the body by those who should have known better, and who could not have read it without noticing its rancorous spirit. Documents are garbled, facts are perverted, and every worthless device is resorted to for the purpose of defaming the synod, which has suffered much from this left-handed blow of Mr. Gellatly; and the Relief fathers were faulty at the time in not exposing it.

As Mr. Gellatly was a man of very decided mental vigour, he strove to gather a party,—and he was successful in mustering a few individuals around his standard. At the death of Mr. Cowan he got Colingsburgh supplied by Mr. Paton, who officiated there for several years. The most shining talents, however, will not do without principle and piety. Gellatly's congregation at Had-dington was soon scattered, and he himself passed into oblivion. The church of Colingsburgh was eventually supplied by the Rev. Mr. Scott, who was for a time one of the missionaries of Mr. Haldane, and who continued long to labour amongst his people without having another minister in connection with him. He stood alone. Offers were made to the church to return to the Establishment as a chapel; yet still they declined the invitations. Like a solitary rock cast out from the main chain of mountains, they had an additional interest thrown around them from their solitary position. Mr. Scott having died 1842, the old church, though in ruins, is again in the possession of the synod; and not a few are favouring the dust thereof. It is to be hoped that the time to favour Zion, even the set time, is come.

At the same meeting of synod, 1773, in which complaints were lodged against Cowan, the seat of the western presbytery was removed from Dunfermline to Glasgow; and it does not appear that Mr. Gillespie ever afterwards attended any of its meetings. He could not be expected to do so. He was sinking apace under the infirmities of age, and the wasting influence of excessive labour. He was able, however, to preach almost to the last. In pressing the gospel upon others amid increasing bodily frailties, he administered comfort to his own heart. "Peace with God,

and peace of conscience, afforded him a joy that the world can neither give nor take away. In his last sickness his soul prospered, and was in health. Nor did the approach of the king of terrors diminish his serenity of mind, and good hope through grace; and as he had lived by the faith of the Son of God, he died in the faith, 19th January, 1774,"\* in the 66th year of his age, and 33d of his ministry.

On his death-bed, Mr. Gillespie having no burying-place of his own, expressed a wish to be interred in the tomb of his old friend, the Rev. James Wardlaw, who had died a short time after he had been admitted to Carnock. When the new parish-church of Dunfermline was built, the grave was re-opened, and his remains were removed within the precincts of the old Gothic church of which Ralph Erskine was once the minister. His ashes now repose in the sepulchre of the late Dr. Gib. No tablet or inscription marks the spot. Ralph Erskine and Gillespie, who mainly originated the two largest dissenting denominations in Scotland, now sleep in the same cemetery, and silently await in their resting-place the resurrection of the just.

Under the overruling providence of God, he was made the founder of a new denomination, without being ambitious of the honour, or apparently fitted for the arduous undertaking. He was a man of plain manners and guileless conversation. He knew little of the world. He neither shone in church courts nor courted popular applause. With a temper somewhat keen, his honesty of purpose was above suspicion, and he could not be bent by any considerations of expediency or worldly profit from his deliberate and conscientious purpose. His study was his home. He was a good theologian of the Marrow or Bostonian school. He knew his own heart thoroughly; and, though his style was not ornate, and his delivery was far from being graceful, yet, as he was a smart, sound, instructive, and deeply experimental preacher, persons who were under anxious concern about their salvation delighted to sit at his feet, and hang upon his lips. "His goodness was his greatness." His sincerity, which peered far above all his other qualifications, gave him a powerful hold over the religious feelings of the country.

When he was deposed, the object was to strike terror into the ranks of the popular party; and, as he was an insignificant country minister, with a small parish, and mostly poor people, there was

\* Preface to 'Essay on Temptation,' by Dr. Erskine.

apparently no great danger to be apprehended in launching a thunderbolt at his head, though he was firm and resolute at the bar of the Assembly. He would soon yield. They had not measured, however, the depth of religious principle in his heart. Their ecclesiastic thunder struck a simple shepherd standing upon the Rock of ages. It was innocuous, because conducted into the earth by the *cross* which he held in his hand. Religion enabled him to triumph. He was persuaded that the word of God, the honour of the Saviour's crown, and the scriptural rights and liberties of the people, required that he should have no hand in inducting any minister upon a reclaiming congregation, and he would rather peril his station in society and his daily bread, than peril his salvation by injuring the cause of his Master. No power on earth could prevent him from preaching to his people, or prevent his people from hearing him; and he had seen in the case of Doddridge and others, by whom he was at first ordained, that religion was not confined within the walls of an Establishment, and that it could flourish abundantly without any provision from the state.

The popular mind sympathized deeply with him. His name became known. The man who had dared to be honest at the expense of manse and stipend, and who had made himself a living martyr for the rights of the people, was flocked to from all quarters. His religious influence gathered around him a great multitude of attached followers, who constrained him to become their head. He was remarkably the child of Providence as to his conversion and religious training. He was nurtured for the part he was destined to act; and, in due season, he became a rallying point for the oppressed heritage of God.

The chief advantage which sprang from his resisting the sentence of deposition, and continuing to preach as a Dissenter, was his teaching the people a bold and uncompromising spirit. He showed them that they were not to succumb,—that there was no use in attempting to prevent the settlement of ministers with scythes, and clubs, and stones; but that they had the remedy in their own hands, and that if they united their means, they could easily support the gospel for themselves. His principle of free communion was the very thing that Scotland, lying bleeding from her ecclesiastical wounds, urgently required. His system was hailed as a harbinger of peace among brethren. Visible saints forgot their disputes about lesser matters, and gathered amicably around him. On his comprehensive views churches

were formed out of otherwise discordant materials, and the people of God, who had been accustomed to excommunicate each other, began to feel and act as brethren. He lived to see his followers surprisingly increased. Though a rough surge flowed in upon the commencement of his opening cause, and he had to pass through it, yet he never deserted his first principles, nor ever expressed any regret for the step which he had conscientiously taken. He has left an untarnished reputation to the church behind him; and now he knows the full meaning of that passage of scripture which was so deeply impressed upon his mind at the time of his deposition,—“What thou knowest not now thou shalt know hereafter.” What a moral waste many a parish must have been but for the opportune erection of the Relief Presbytery by Gillespie, Boston, and Colier,—“for the relief of Christians oppressed in their Christian privileges!”

After the death of Mr. Gillespie, his congregation lost their church, by means which, till this day, have been involved in mystery. It was not indeed worth much, being an old malt barn fitted up in the emergency as a place of worship; yet still it is to be regretted it was lost. A number of personal friends, after the deposition of Gillespie, united their subscriptions, bought it, repaired it as a place of worship, and reserved to themselves, at his death, the right of selling it, and dividing the proceeds. The majority could either sell it, or keep it up as a place of worship, paying out those who wished to have back their money. This was all very reasonable, for Gillespie had then no ministerial adherents. On the day of his funeral, his brother Robert invited in the churchyard a number of the original donors, or their heirs, to meet that afternoon and consider what was to be done with the church. The meeting was irregularly summoned, and altogether illegal. Robert Gillespie was at one time a warm adherent of the Relief cause. He had been the mainspring in erecting College-street church, Edinburgh; but a change had come suddenly over the temper of his mind. The Rev. Mr. Smith, the successor of Gillespie, in his Relief Sketches, says, in a kind of suspicious way, “*for reasons best known to himself*, he was now become the avowed enemy of that religious society which his deceased brother had the honour of founding.” It is certain he was by this time the land-factor of Dr. Erskine, Edinburgh, for his estate in the parish of Carnock, who was the great friend of Gillespie, and who strove repeatedly to get his sentence relaxed



or reversed, and to win him back to the Establishment. He defended him warmly from the pulpit and in the Assembly, and strenuously laboured afterwards to get Gillespie's church taken in by the Assembly as a chapel-of-ease. How far the factor was co-operating with the wishes of the *laird*, in endeavouring to put an extinguisher upon the Relief cause in that corner, (for the Carnock people still came in on Sabbath to Dunfermline,) no one is ever likely to discover. This much at least is certain, that Dr. Erskine published, a few months after Gillespie's death, a treatise which Gillespie had written many years before, 'On Temptation;' and in a Preface to it, he parades the notice that Gillespie "sincerely rejoiced in the erection of chapels-of-ease, as what might gradually supersede the necessity of the Presbytery of Relief," and that "he had much at heart that his church should become a chapel." It is a very suspicious circumstance that Robert, his factor, should have called the clandestine meeting, that he should have been present at it, that he should have been the chief speaker, and that he wrought upon the feelings of the people, and represented his brother as being ill used in the case of Pirie. He openly disparaged the Relief, and extolled the chapel-of-ease plan as a far better scheme. Still the contributors would not change the religious connection of the house. The meeting was therefore adjourned. Cowan from Colingsburgh, who was under a process before the synod for schismatical courses in his own church, was got over to preach the funeral sermon, and he furthered the same views.\* "To complete the farce," says Smith, "it was found necessary to publish in the *newspapers* that Mr. Gillespie intended to have abandoned his former principles by turning his meeting-house into a chapel-of-ease." "However ridiculous this bait was, it caught a number who had great respect for this good man." Papers were hawked about through the original donors and their heirs, and, at the adjourned meeting, a majority of them were secured for the alienation of the property from the Relief synod.

\* The sermon which he preached on the occasion was not printed till more than twenty years afterwards. By this time Mr. Cowan was also dead. It was edited by his brother and the same party, who, in the year preceding, had published what they called 'The History and Principles of the First Constituted Presbytery of Relief.' As they had a purpose to serve, and did not scruple at the means of attaining it, no confidence can be placed in anything which they gave to the public. Their object was to abuse the synod, and make the world believe that Gillespie was one of themselves.

In all these steps the congregation was never consulted, and few indeed of the members of the church concurred. When the case came before the Established church courts, the application for admission, though pled by the Hon. Henry Erskine in the General Assembly, was twice rejected, as being "crude and irregular." The members of the Established presbytery of Dunfermline characterized it as such in the severest terms. The Rev. Mr. Liston, Aberdour, of the presbytery of Dunfermline, in a speech before the Assembly, stated the case fully, and placed it in a light anything but honourable to the parties concerned in it. "After the decease of the late Mr. Gillespie," said he, "a majority of the donors who had erected his meeting-house, proposed to employ it as a chapel-of-ease, and to apply to the presbytery of Dunfermline for a minister in communion with the Church of Scotland. An application was therefore made by them, but without the concurrence of a single man in the congregation of hearers. An appearance was made at our bar in opposition to it, as being contrary to the general sentiments of the people; and the petition was refused by the presbytery."—"Last year these donors applied to us, without asking the concurrence of one of their people. These very men, who had carried off a people, under the notion of giving them relief from the tyranny of patronage, on occasion of their first vacancy, acted as the most arbitrary patrons. They consult, vote, and determine, without taking the sentiments of one of their people, not in the question merely, who shall be their minister, but in a more important question, whether he shall be one of their own sect or not? whether he shall be chosen from the Presbytery of Relief, or from the Established church? This year, these same men come with the subscriptions of a few, but of all they could procure; and these, it appears, they have obtained by throwing out the old lure of a free choice of one to be their minister. This is truly acting like men versant in borough politics."\*

The donors themselves, after the first meeting, resiled from the step which they had taken. At a meeting held on July 12, 1774, "they unanimously recalled and annulled their former application to the Established presbytery, and ordered and appointed an application to be made to the Relief presbytery, and ordain the meeting-house to be kept up for worship and dispensing gospel ordinances

\* The Edin. Mag. and Rev., vol. iv., pp. 412, 415. 1775.

in connection with the Relief synod, as it has been ever since there was any such presbytery or synod.”\* Against this unanimous resolution at a meeting of donors regularly called from the pulpit, “Robert Gillespie at Clearburn for himself, and as pretending to have powers from some few of the contributors,”† protested, got out an interdict from the Court of Session, and a process at law was commenced, whether the judgment of the meeting on the 3d of Feb., or of 12th July, was to be adhered to. The process was never finished. The property was not of great value. It did not belong to the worshipping congregation. They therefore proceeded to build a new church for themselves, and some years afterwards, the Establishment took the old meeting-house into connection with the church, as a chapel-of-ease. Robert Gillespie was at the bottom of the whole affair, and his conduct neither admits of explanation nor defence. The people at all events were turned out of the church in which they had been accustomed to worship, and met with treatment at the hands of Robert Gillespie and Provost Turnbull, acting for the magistrates of Dunfermline, very much akin to what Thomas Gillespie had received at the hands of the Church of Scotland. There is much of the usurping tyrant in human nature.

These things were scarcely worthy of being so fully dwelt on, had it not been that the facts are not well-known; and there is a continual flourish kept up in church of Scotland publications, that Gillespie’s church, at his death, by his advice, joined the Establishment. Smith, his successor, says expressly, that “Mr. Gillespie had no difference with his brethren, as to the constitution and principles of the Relief church, though he was much offended on account of their opinion of a particular man—Mr. Pirie.” The Establishment got the walls of the meeting-house by dint of law, but the church, meaning by that the Christian people, continued with few exceptions in their old connection, and till this day, exists as a respectable religious society. The Relief donors lost their original donations; but having got a church of their own, they neither contended nor cared for the trifle.

While these internal commotions were going on within the bosom of the Relief church, and while engaged also in an unnatural controversy, begun by the Seceders, the Church of Scotland was steadily pursuing the course which had been marked out

\* Minute of Meeting as quoted in process before the Court of Session.

† Process.

by her leaders. She was bearing down all popular interference with the legal rights of patrons, and giving effect to presentations over the whole face of the country. It was no easy matter, however, to teach the people, that an act of parliament was the statute-book of the church of Christ, and oppressed congregations were continually applying either to the Secession or Relief.

The great effort which had been made to popularize the constitution of the Church of Scotland, by pressing forward the schism overture, had signally failed. The policy of the moderates was triumphant. The wavy ocean, however, after a storm, does not sink down all at once into a state of rest. It so happened that Principal Robertson was not a member of the Assembly 1768. His commission from the college was vitiated by some glaring errors which had crept into it, and he found it prudent to go, during the session of the Assembly, into England. The absence of one leading man unexpectedly, will leave a whole party powerless. In his absence, the popular party mustered strongly; and as a popular ministry composed of Whigs and Tories, and opposed to Bute, who had been compelled to resign the premiership, were still in office, several important matters were proposed and carried, over the heads of their opponents. They not only arrested, as they thought, the two unpopular settlements of St. Ninians and Glendovan, though in this they were mistaken, for the Principal afterwards revived them and carried them through; but they, in a very hurried and unconstitutional manner, got the Assembly, by an overture passed at the moment, "to appoint a committee of their number to correspond with the landed interest and royal boroughs of Scotland, and the several presbyteries, to collect their sentiments concerning the grievances felt from the rigorous exercise of the law of patronage, and the proper measures to be taken for relieving the church from them, and how far it is proper to apply to the legislature for a repeal of the law itself." \* This was in effect adroitly carrying the schism overture under another name when the leader of the Assembly was absent, his forces broken, and Bute, their patron, was in disgrace with the nation. The opportunity was too good to be allowed to slip. The committee sent circulars throughout the country, recommending it to ministers to hold meetings of the heritors, and to consult with the chief magistrates of boroughs about mitigating the law of patronage.

\* Scots Mag. vol. xxx. p. 277.



It was a strange mitigation which they proposed. The election of the minister was to be by delegates chosen by the heritors, kirk session, parishioners, and patron. And the ecclesiastical judicatories were finally to judge of the qualifications of the person elected *for the particular parish*; so that in fact the clergy were to be the patrons. The divine right of Christians to elect their own teachers was quietly thrown overboard, and “the settlement of a parochial minister” was to be sought, “not so much as an article of faith, as a question of political arrangement.” The plan was crude and visionary, conflicting in many of its parts, not likely to please the landed proprietors, and anything but popular with the laity, and therefore, the “brains” were knocked out of the committee in 1779, by a vote of 115 to 87, and the abortive attempt was allowed to perish. It greatly alienated and disgusted the people, and put additional weapons into the hands of the dissenters, who contended strenuously, and more strenuously now than ever, for the divine right of the people to elect their own office-bearers.

At this time, 1768, a very able pamphlet was published, ‘By a Friend to the Natural and Religious Rights of Mankind;’ being ‘an Attempt to Prove that every Species of Patronage is foreign to the Nature of the Church,’ which speedily passed through two editions, though far more bulky than such ephemeral productions usually are. Its author was the Rev. William Graham, Anti-burgher minister, then of Whitehaven, afterwards of Newcastle. It was a remarkable production to have been written at that early period, and contains the principles which he afterwards illustrated at more length (1792) in his ‘Review of the Ecclesiastical Establishments of Europe.’ A man who could think, and express himself as he then did about the connection of church and state, must have been possessed of a highly gifted and independent mind. Its object is to show that patronage overthrows the essential and peculiar qualities of Christ’s kingdom, and springs from the unscriptural establishment of religion by civil governments. A single paragraph will give the key to the whole production. Says he,—“Patronage overthrows the very essential properties of the kingdom of Christ in this world. If we shall diligently attend to the sacred oracles, and shall frame our ideas of the church and kingdom of Christ according to the descriptions which are given of that kingdom there, we shall find her to be a society very different from what it is gener-

ally apprehended to be. Men have been accustomed to blend the idea of the church with the notion of a royal patent—a legal establishment, or the sanction of civil authority in favour of a particular denomination of Christians, who have been educated unto the observance of a certain peculiar system of rites; whereby that denomination is empowered as such, to monopolize the name of the church, with all the honours and profits tacked unto these sanctions; and to exclude all from belonging unto the church, who do not choose to be chained unto such observances by the fetters of civil authority. Men have inadvertently thought, that the trappings of civil authority, and legal establishments, necessarily belong unto the very being, or the well-being of the church; and all because they never heard that religious societies were dignified with the honourable appellation of *The Church*, without them. This puts me in mind of the absurd idea, which, it is said, the Americans formed of the Europeans, whom they saw mounted upon horses. They fancied the man and the beast to be one creature, because they had not seen them both asunder. This motley and confused idea of the kingdom of Christ, first gave occasion for the law of patronage; for so soon as the church is incorporated with the civil constitution, and receives its sanction and settlement from it, it becomes a branch of it. Hence, as every constitution has a right to preserve itself, and frame such laws as are best calculated to keep every part of the complex constitution dependent upon, and serviceable unto the whole;—the guardians wisely judged, that the law of patronage was absolutely necessary to keep the church, or the clergy, in proper subordination unto the good of the whole, and of the other part of the complex constitution—the civil.

“But as such a confused medley is altogether foreign unto revelation and common sense, and contrary unto the nature of the church; so the law of patronage, however naturally it is connected with, and necessarily results from such an heterogeneous mixture, is utterly subversive of the essential properties of Christ’s kingdom.”\*

\* ‘An Attempt to Prove that every Species of Patronage is foreign to the Nature of the Church; and, that any Modifications, which either have been, or ever can be proposed, are insufficient to regain, and secure her in the possession of the Liberty, wherewith Christ hath made her free. In Six Dissertations. With an Introduction, wherein the unhappy condition, to which the Church of Scotland is reduced, by the present Ecclesiastic Management, is represented as the Reason of

Sentiments like these taught the people to think. The Glasites, and not a few of the early Relief ministers, were strenuously advocating them, and, with the advance of religious liberty, they were gradually making their way among the inquiring portion of the community. The American war of Independency bursting forth at the time, and leading the public mind to discuss the principles of government and civil subjection, contributed in no small degree to convince the mass of the people that, if they would be spiritually free, they required to take the cause into their own hands, and reduce it to practice. In all parts of the country new meeting-houses sprung up, when a parish had an unacceptable minister intruded upon them.

St. Ninians, Irvine, Kilmaronock, and many other parishes, had Relief churches erected in them, from 1770 till 1780, because they were oppressed in their spiritual privileges, and the doctrine was widely spreading, according to the language of the period, that “the church and state should not be *kneaded* together.”

The case of St. Ninians was one of very great oppression. The presentee, the Rev. Mr. Thomson, Gargunnock, was a somewhat aged person, of a weakly constitution and feeble voice. The whole parish were opposed to him, and not an elder nor head of a family that resided in the parish of St. Ninians signed his call; and yet the General Assembly, after years of opposition, and after the case had been by appeals thrice before them, were inexorable to the wishes of the people, and ordered his translation and induction to be carried into effect. The patron and presentee must be gratified, and the conscientious religious feelings of the people prostrated in the dust. The Presbytery of Stirling were unanimous against it. The Synod of Perth and Stirling were unanimous against it; and the general opinion of the whole country-side denounced the sentence of the Assembly as a wanton exercise of ecclesiastical domination, tending to the grievous oppression of the inhabitants of the parish. It was all in vain. The settlement went on; but those people who had armed in

the present Undertaking: And a Conclusion, wherein the only Method left for Reformation is proposed, and recommended to the Friends of Christian Liberty. BY A FRIEND TO THE NATURAL AND RELIGIOUS RIGHTS OF MANKIND.’ Second Edition. Edinburgh: MDCCLXIX. P. 60.—Mr. Graham, in a pamphlet titled ‘A Candid Vindication of the Secession Church,’ published at Newcastle 1790, acknowledges himself the author of the above pamphlet on patronage, and it is dishonouring not to give him the credit of it.

hundreds, at the battle of Falkirk, about fifteen years before, in behalf of their king and constitution, were not to be crushed by the tyrannical decision of an ecclesiastical court in Edinburgh. Mr. Thomson might uplift the stipend, but they would have their own church and their own minister, who would break among them the bread of life. The consequence was, the great majority of the inhabitants of the parish left the Establishment, built the Relief church, and called Mr. Patrick Hutchison, then assistant to Mr. Baine of Edinburgh, to be their minister.

The parish of Kilmaronock met with nearly the same treatment at the hands of the Assembly, and about the very same time as that of St. Ninians. The presentee, Mr. Adie, could get almost none connected with the parish to sign his call, while the great bulk of the people were united and strenuous in their opposition against him. The Presbytery of Dumbarton refused to proceed with his settlement, but the Assembly enjoined them. The presbytery then shifted their ground, and when the presentee came to deliver his trial discourses for ordination, refused to sustain them. The people offered to libel him for explaining away the doctrine of the atonement, and teaching other errors contrary to the Confession of Faith, but their libel was never allowed to go to proof; and after several years of harassing and expensive resistance, Mr. Adie was ordained by the authority of the supreme court, and the people in a body left the parish church, and built for themselves a Relief church.

While the people were thus disposed to leave the Established church, not in dribblets but in multitudes, the Relief synod were greatly to blame in not using the proper means for the increase of their preachers. They dwarfed their denomination at its very commencement, by not training young men for the office of the ministry.

Though more than ten years had elapsed from the constitution of the Presbytery till the erection of themselves into a synod, no measures had been taken to erect a regular Relief Theological Institution. One preacher dropped in from this quarter, and another from that, according as they became convinced of the scriptural nature of the Relief system, and approved of their liberal terms of communion; but these accessions were far from being adequate to the necessities of the synod. The Divinity halls, in the different universities, very naturally became the places where students from Relief churches received their theological education.



Where could they go, as they had no hall of their own, after they had finished their academical course, but follow the stream of their class-fellows, into the National Divinity halls? They were cheerfully received by the professors. The principles of free communion adopted by the Relief church seemed to favour this plan of education, and the controversy still raging with the Seceders drove them nearer to the church. The Established professors at that time did not teach Church politics, but the science of theology. The plan also prevented the Relief licentiates from being exposed to the taunts heaped upon those of other dissenting denominations, that they were not so well-educated as the Established clergy. Still, with all these palliatives, the Fathers of the Relief were greatly to blame in not providing a theological hall in which to educate ministers for their churches. They allowed the flood-tide of popular favour to rise and fall without turning it into their own reservoirs.

In the course of the first two years after the Glasgow presbytery began its sittings in Glasgow, 1773, it had on its roll as vacancies Irvine, St. Ninians, Kilmaronock, Dunfermline, Glasgow, and Bothwell, all large congregations, with only an occasional preacher from the Edinburgh presbytery. The supply which was given them was generally only one Sabbath in two months, and that by the ministers leaving their own churches vacant. Such a state of things was discouraging in the extreme. Nothing but stern necessity could compel any people to cast in their lot with them. Yet many places did it, as the people could not go and hear intruded ministers, nor stay at home and altogether desert religious ordinances, to their own loss, and to the great injury of their children and servants.

Another sore evil that resulted from this scarcity of preachers in the Relief body was, the temptation under which one congregation was brought to strip a sister church of its pastor by offering him a higher emolument, or holding out the prospect of more usefulness. Jealousies and heartburnings were thus produced. Other denominations that were very chary of translations, took advantage of the fact to denounce the Relief ministers as going over the country and scrambling for nothing but money. It was injurious also to the staid habits and contentment of the ministers themselves. Translations, prudently permitted, will do no evil in a church where there are others to fill up the vacancy which is thereby made. Novelty has a great attraction with many; and

many a man at first may be planted in a sphere which is anything but suited to his taste and talents. A minister's fitness for particular localities is often only discovered when the activities of official duty bring out his peculiar characteristic attainments.

A somewhat important case, which served very much to fix the rule as to translations in the Relief body, took place in the year 1776. The Relief congregation of Glasgow having come to a vote after Cruden left them, whether they should join the Establishment, or still continue in connection with the Relief, the majority of proprietors (the members of the church had no vote) decided on an application to the Church of Scotland as a chapel-of-ease. The people, however, generally continued by the Relief synod, and built a new spacious church for themselves in Dovehill-street. They called the Rev. Thomas Bell of Jedburgh to be their minister. Mr. Bell, who will be afterwards frequently referred to in these pages, was a native of the town of Moffat, and a licentiate of the Edinburgh Relief Presbytery. "He embraced the Dissenting interest from a full conviction that it was most favourable to the religious rights of man, and most agreeable to the constitution of the primitive church." \* A short time after he received license he was ordained over the Relief congregation of Jedburgh, which had met with several sore disappointments after the death of Boston, before it procured a person to fill the vacancy. As Mr. Bell was a man of strong natural powers, grave in his manner, pointed in his mode of address, an excellent theologian, and a warm friend of evangelical religion, he soon resuscitated the Jedburgh congregation, and imparted to it all its early vigour and life. During ten years, he laboured with great acceptance and success among them. To pull him away, and translate him to Glasgow, was like tearing out their heart. It was lacerating them to the quick. The Presbytery of Edinburgh referred the case to the synod without giving any decision; and the synod, two different years, 1776 and 1777, when the cause came before them, refused to translate him from Jedburgh to Glasgow. They evidently proceeded, both years, upon the old Presbyterian principle, that a church court has a controlling judgment over all the parties concerned in a translation, and can prevent it if the edification of "the body of Christ" is in danger of being injured thereby. Mr. A. Simpson, and several other members of court, protested

\* Bell's Ser., Pref. 1803.

against the decision as tyrannical in the extreme. They held that, as Mr. Bell was willing to be removed, and the Glasgow congregation were petitioning for his translation; and farther, that as the Jedburgh people did not wish to retain him, unless he willingly gave up the Glasgow Call, that he ought not to be detained by the mere arm of ecclesiastical authority. It was not pretended that there was any trickery in the matter; but that every step had been taken in a legal and formal manner. The presbytery certainly were doing no more than was at the time considered within the limits of a presbyterian judicature, and which Mr. Bell, according to strict form, should have obeyed. The Glasgow commissioners, however, "appealed to the first free and unbiassed Relief presbyterian synod when it should meet at Edinburgh or elsewhere:" and having thus thrown off the authority of court, and got the consent of Mr. Bell, who thought himself an injured and aggrieved man, he also gave in his demission, and translated himself to Glasgow, where he was welcomed by a numerous and highly respectable society, who were delighted that they had procured him, even though it was at the expense of ecclesiastical order.

Mr. Bell came to Glasgow in 1777, and continued to stand alone for several years. None of the ministers of the synod held any ministerial intercourse with him. The eyes of the religious public were keenly turned towards them, as Ramsay had attacked Mr. Bell's conduct from the press, and censured the Relief courts as being lax in their treatment of him. To the joy of all parties, a reunion was effected in April, 1783; but not before the infliction of pretty sharp ecclesiastical censures. Mr. Bell and the commissioners confessed their sorrow before the Presbytery for what they had done, and were rebuked by the moderator. He was suspended two Sabbaths from the office of the ministry. The congregation was treated as a vacant church under the care of the Presbytery. They took charge of the pulpit, appointed the Sacrament, and the person who should preside on the occasion. An extract of the sentence, and of the censure, were read before the congregation; and a day was appointed for the admission of Mr. Bell, according to the rules of the church. This procedure stopped the mouths of those who were defaming the Relief as a body that trampled upon everything like law and good order. When a man like Mr. Bell submitted to censure, where was the person who could expect to escape?

At the same time it must be allowed that Mr. Bell had, in strict justice, some good grounds for acting as he had done, and asserting his liberty. Though it was not done in a formal way, yet his case, ever afterwards, introduced a better plan for presbyteries managing translations. They ceased henceforward to detain a minister in his church contrary to his wish. Compulsion here, as in everything else, was seen to be wrong. In the case of a translation, the presbyteries, as the guardians of righteous procedure, retained to themselves the right of seeing that everything was conducted in a regular manner,—that there was no dishonest dealing between the parties,—and also gave their judgment as friends and co-presbyters, whether, in their estimation, the translation was for the interests of religion : but they required the person himself ultimately to take the moral responsibilities of the step upon his own shoulders, and to say whether he wished to be translated or not ; and all things being fair and honourable, they decided accordingly. Like every moral union, it was held that the union between a minister and his people cannot be formed without the consent of parties. This was departing somewhat from the old power of presbytery ; but it was making their decisions more rational, and preserving liberty without licentiousness in the church of God. The plan has not been attended with evil consequences, to any considerable extent ; and other denominations, in the course of years, and in the progress of religious liberty, have seen it proper to adopt it, and, in a great measure, to act upon it.

In the same year, 1776, when Mr. Bell's affair was before the synod, the Dysart presbytery was constituted by order of the supreme court. The Relief had now spread very considerably in Fife. It was felt to be inconvenient for the ministers in that quarter to come to Glasgow as the seat of their presbytery, —they had hitherto formed a constituent part of it, without being able to attend its meetings.



## CHAPTER XVII.

CONSEQUENCES OF MR. BELL'S COMING TO GLASGOW—REPEAL OF THE PENAL STATUTES AGAINST THE ROMANISTS—BELL AND HUTCHISON ON TOLERATION.

MR. BELL came to Glasgow immediately before a very eventful period in the religious history of Scotland. Next year (1778) the fact began to transpire, that government intended to modify the penal laws, which were still slumbering on the statute-book, against Romanists. The whole country thereupon burst into a flame. The conflagration was in a great measure kindled and fanned by the ministers of religion, who dreaded the return of Popery with all its errors, cruelties, and debasing superstitions.

When William, in 1688, was elected to the vacant throne of Britain, the government was settled on what was called a Protestant basis. All the offices of the country were to be held by Protestants. Papists were even expatriated, for they could neither buy nor sell, nor be infected in property of any kind. Their religion was not tolerated, their priests were banished, and the penalty of death was suspended over professed Papists if they continued to persevere, after being warned, in the profession of their religion. The extirpation of Popery by ecclesiastical power and the pains and penalties of civil law, was stipulated for by the leading parties before the crown was placed upon the head of the Prince of Orange. He was anxious that toleration principles, to a certain extent, should be adopted towards the Catholics, and appealed to them if they really meant that he should draw the sword against them. At this they were staggered, yet still the country had suffered so much from religious wars, and the tyrannical and popish leanings of the Stuarts, that the community would submit to no compromise, and William was obliged to yield and take the coronation-oath to extirpate Popery.

Things continued in this state for a hundred years. The statute-books of England, Ireland, and Scotland, were loaded with penal laws against Romanists dripping with blood. It is one thing, however, to enact bloody laws, and another thing to get magistrates so cool and cruel as to put them in force. The principles of toleration began gradually to gain ground during the reigns of George I. and II., so that it became a universal maxim—"that there should be no persecution for the sake of conscience." All religious parties held in theory, "that the Lord alone was Lord of the conscience." This principle Lord North, during the heat of the American war, began practically to apply to the Romanists for the purpose of strengthening the country, and uniting all religious parties as one great phalanx against the numerous kingdoms which were now leagued against Britain. Having conquered Canada, and wrested it from the French, its Catholic religious establishment from state policy was not disturbed. As the French were threatening to invade England through the medium of Ireland, which was expected to join them on account of the sore religious persecutions inflicted upon its inhabitants because they were Papists, an act of partial relief was passed in their favour, and the consequence was, that Romanists in thousands rallied round the British throne, and strove who should first enrol themselves as volunteers to defend their country from a foreign invasion. The revocation of many of the severe penal laws against the English Catholics speedily followed. The favour was most thankfully received. Catholics flocked to take the prescribed oaths of allegiance to government, and appearances seemed to intimate that the old religious wounds of the country would be healed without a scar. Very unexpectedly also in the spring of 1779, an act was passed for the relief of Protestant dissenters in England, extending to them all the benefits of the toleration act, on their solemnly declaring their belief in the scriptures of the Old and New Testament, as containing the revealed will of God, without signing the doctrinal articles of the Church of England. This was a great step in the history of religious liberty. The principle that no man should suffer as a citizen because of his religious opinions, was thus beautifully developing itself in practice, and the nation was becoming strong and compact throughout the whole body politic.

The number of Catholics in Scotland did not amount to twenty thousand. They were chiefly persons in the lower ranks

of life, and residing in remote and uncultivated parts of the Highlands. There were not twenty persons possessing a hundred pounds a-year in land, and there was not among them a single merchant of wealth and respectability.\* It was of some importance, however, to get the army recruited, and government seems to have cast a longing eye upon the Catholic Highlanders. So early as "the month of February, 1778, when the nation was alarmed with the unhappy fate of Burgoyne's army in America, application was made by one of His Majesty's judges in Scotland to Bishop Hay, head of the Roman Catholic clergy in Edinburgh, to know the sentiments of the Roman Catholics in Scotland, with regard to the American rebellion, and how far they would be willing to assist their country if required. Bishop Hay with joy embraced this opportunity of making his own and his friends' sentiments known to government; and in a letter to the person who applied to him, gave a full account of the attachment of the Roman Catholics in Scotland to their king and country, and of their readiness to serve both with their lives and fortunes. This account was soon confirmed in effect, by the readiness with which great numbers of Roman Catholics enlisted in the levies which were then going on in Scotland, and without whom some of the regiments would not perhaps have been completed to this day. Bishop Hay's letter was soon after communicated to government; and by his means, also, the affair was made known to the English Catholics."†

At the meeting of the General Assembly, 1778, the report was mentioned that government intended to repeal the penal statutes against Papists, and an attempt was made to found an overture upon it; but as no communication had been made to them from any official quarter, Principal Robertson got the matter quashed, and quietly dismissed by a great majority of votes,—118 to 24. The debate was conducted with becoming good temper and moderation. The government measure, however, for the relief of the Scotch Catholics was in progress, and early in 1779 it began to be freely talked of, and the agents of the ministry held out to the people of Scotland that it was to be introduced into parliament from no love to Popery, but that the nation might derive strength from the affection, loyalty,

\* Principal Robertson's Speech before the Assembly.

† Minutes of Procedure of the Preseses of eighty-five private Societies in and about Glasgow.

and co-operation, of all classes and parties of His Majesty's subjects.

The Scotch statute-book was loaded with numerous penal laws against the Papists. The act, however, which it was purposed particularly to repeal, was the act of 1700, for preventing the growth of Popery, and which King William had reluctantly sanctioned. It re-enacts a great number of the old acts which make the hearing of mass a capital punishment, impose fines and imprisonment upon every man who should harbour Papists, or sell them books, or remove their children out of the country without the authority of the presbytery. It then goes on to state at great length: 1. That every one who shall seize a Popish priest in the country shall receive a reward from government; and if the priest shall attempt to conceal his profession, he shall be banished; and if he should return, be put to death. 2. If any person whatever shall be found in a place where there are any of the vestments or images used in popish worship, and refuse to purge himself of Popery, he shall be banished with certificate of death if he should return. 3. That the children of Papists shall be taken from them by their Protestant relations. 4. No Papist shall purchase land; and should he do so, and the seller come to the knowledge of the fact, he shall retain both the price and the land, and the Papist shall have no redress. 5. That no Papist, above 15 years of age, shall inherit any property left to him by another, and when he comes to 15 years of age, if he does not then become a Protestant, it shall be again taken from him. 6. That it shall not be in the power of any Papist to sell and dispoñe any heritable property whatever. 7. That no money can be left to any Roman Catholic institution. 8. That if any person apostatize from Protestantism to Romanism, he shall forfeit his estate to his next Protestant heir. 9. That no Papist can be a curator, a factor, a schoolmaster, a teacher of any kind whatever. 10. That no Protestant shall keep a domestic servant who is a Papist. 11. The presbytery of the bounds has power to apply the oath of purgation, which was as solemn and inquisitorial as man could frame it. ✓

Such were the various particulars of the act which it was purposed to repeal, and by the repeal of which the Catholics would merely have been made citizens capable of buying, selling, and inheriting property, with the liberty of teaching their children in their own faith, and worshipping God according to the dictates of



their conscience; but they were still to be continued incapable, by former acts, of holding any office under government, and of exercising any elective franchise in the kingdom.

The matter was brought before the Relief synod in May 1778. It had been before the Assembly a few days before. No very strong resolutions were founded by the synod upon it. The synod satisfied themselves with declaring that "they heartily detested the doctrine of persecution for conscience' sake; yet, as Popery was spreading in the land, many of the principles of which they regarded as false, impious, and incompatible with the civil and religious rights of mankind, they resolve to be awake to the event which was dreaded, and if the penal laws were repealed, and the Protestant interest suffered thereby, the ministers were to exert themselves, in their respective congregations, against the spread of Popery." In their minutes on the subject, they make no reference to petitioning parliament, or using any civil means, or going, as politicians, out of their sphere, but they resolve to keep themselves to their own churches, as the places where they would stem, by their preaching, the flood-tide of Popery.

The country, however, was now becoming awake to its supposed danger from Popery, and in its vision all the old religious wars were renewed, and the land was seen in prospect to be deluged with blood. The different Established synods, in their meetings at harvest, published alarming resolutions. Societies of correspondence were formed in Edinburgh and Glasgow. Corporations met in every town throughout the country, and passed strong resolutions. The alarm became universal. Pamphlets and appeals of the most exciting kind were dispersed in every quarter. The fears and passions of men were wrought up to the very highest degree of excitement. The synod of Glasgow and Ayr went a step farther than any of the other synods, and appointed a day of fasting and humiliation on account of "the astonishing progress of this detestable, cruel, and unjust superstition, which is so much the more alarming as it appears not only in remote and uncultivated corners, but in the most populous and improved corners of the land." Next Sabbath the excited multitude took the redress into their own hands, and attacked a house in the High-street, where the Catholics were assembled for worship, breaking its windows, maltreating its priest, and abusing a few poor Highland women who had met for religious service, pelting them with dirt and stones, and venting curses and impre-

cations upon all Papists. On the evening of the fast-day (9th Feb., 1779), the enraged populace, in the full exercise of that very spirit which they attributed to Popery, assembled round the house of a Roman Catholic, at the east end of Gallowgate, where the Papists were said at times to assemble for worship, set it on fire, and consumed and destroyed the property. From thence they went to King-street, forced open the shop of a Catholic, and destroyed all its contents. By vigorous exertion the mob was dispersed, and all farther mischief prevented.

The same riotous proceedings had, a few days before, been resorted to in Edinburgh for the purpose of punishing Papists and their friends, without the formality of a legal trial. A Roman Catholic place of worship, and the house of Bishop Hay, together with his library, were burnt and destroyed. The houses of other Papists were broken open and spoiled of their goods, and the dwellings of Dr. Robertson and other Protestants, supposed to be favourable to the annulling of the penal acts, were threatened, and only preserved by military force.

In these circumstances, the Catholics wrote to the government to withdraw, in the meantime, the bill for their relief, and the government timidly, and very indiscreetly, thereupon issued notices that the bill for the relief of the Papists was fallen from, and the people were besought to keep their minds easy on the subject. A triumph was thus gained by a lawless mob over the government. This only made them tenfold more daring and pertinacious in their future proceedings. The law ought to have been vindicated before any change of policy was intimated, even though it had been resolved upon by the law officers of the country. But the government of Lord North was a strange mixture of good sense and stupidity, of bold acts and faltering indecision. His policy was literally the iron and the clay in the feet of Daniel's image.

At this juncture, Mr. Bell of Glasgow was not in connection with the Relief synod, and therefore his proceedings and sentiments cannot, in strictness of language, be considered as theirs; yet, in public estimation, he was still considered a Relief minister, and as such, as to popular effect, it is necessary that his conduct should be considered. On the day appointed for fasting and humiliation by the synod of Glasgow and Ayr (10th December, 1778), he began a course of Sermons on the alarming increase of Popery, from Isaiah lix. 19, which he continued to deliver before

a numerous and most attentive audience, till the beginning of April 1779. The Sermons were afterwards thrown into the form of a treatise, and published (1780) under the title of ‘The Standard of the Spirit.’ In these Sermons it was his leading design to point out the abominations of Popery, and at the same time the means by which it might be prevented from overflowing the land. His exposure of the errors of Popery is able, learned, and worthy of the celebrity of the author. While he, like most other writers of the period, disclaims all coercive measures in religion as inconsistent with the genius of the gospel, and only calculated to make hypocrites; yet he thought it proper, as he expresses it, “to tie up the hands of Papists.” He even went so far as to maintain that the magistrate should wear the sword for the honour and defence of both tables of the law; and further, that the church should renew the Covenants, without however appending to them any of the pains and penalties of law. He considered covenanting, or national vowing, a moral duty, which, though not enjoined in the New Testament, was not contrary to its meaning and spirit, as a vow and an oath were the same; and if one person might vow unto the Lord, why might not a church or a nation? and thereby augment, by a solemn voluntary act, their obligations to perform their duty. He never took any step to carry his sentiments into practice, and indeed he expressly declares that he states them merely as his own private opinions, and not “as terms of communion.” In delivering this long course of Sermons, he considered that he was doing his duty to God and his country, and that he was proving himself to be one of the best friends to the Protestant cause. He thus became the centre of a large circle of admiring friends, who, like himself, were trembling “for the safety of the ark of the covenant.”

Before his course of sermons was finished, the whole country, by pamphlets, speeches, newspaper paragraphs, and perpetual sermonizing in all quarters on the danger of Popery, had been roused to a high degree of excitement. The public mind was like the crater of a burning mountain. A collection of 356 sets of resolutions, passed by different meetings held in Scotland, has been preserved, and a vast multitude must have perished. Synods and presbyteries of all denominations, parishes, boroughs, towns, corporations, and private societies, resolved, in the strongest terms, to oppose, by every constitutional method, the repeal of the penal

statutes against Papists in the face of the British parliament, and at the foot of the throne itself. The example of the Covenanters, "in resisting unto blood," was held up as worthy of imitation.

"The friends of the Protestant interest," through their committee of correspondence in Edinburgh, published and industriously circulated over the whole country a pamphlet, giving a condensed 'View of the Scots Statutes against Popery,' and stimulating the public "not to forget the days of their forefathers, and the sufferings which they had received from the hands of the Papists." An extract from their pamphlet is better than a description of the spirit by which they were animated. "The chief enactments against Popery," say they, "besides the abolition of it as the established religion, may be all comprehended in these four particulars. 1st, An absolute prohibition of the public exercise of Popery, by public churches and schools, and especially by the celebration of that wicked and idolatrous institution of the mass. 2dly, An absolute prohibition of all popish bishops, seminary priests, Jesuits, popish teachers of youth, and trafficking Papists. Both which prohibitions are to be enforced by banishment and forfeiture, with the usual certification in banishments, of the judges having a power to inflict such punishment as they shall think proper, in case of a return, being still of the same character. 3dly, Some provisions for having the children of Papists educated by Protestants. 4thly and lastly, A disqualification of Papists, while such, from enjoying heritable rights, either by purchase or succession.

"When some of these laws were framed, the gibbets on which Protestants had suffered were scarcely taken down; the flames in which they endured the most cruel of all deaths were but just extinguished: when the rest were made, these things were still fresh in every one's remembrance. Our enemies themselves then being judges, these laws must appear to have been, at that time at least, gentle and humane to admiration. And ourselves being judges, we cannot see (especially considering how mildly they are executed) why they should yet undergo any alteration, and much less why they should be totally repealed.

"If the principles of the Reformation are indeed to be supported as the principles of true Christianity, it is impossible to dispense with the two first prohibitions. Can it be said that the Protestant religion is properly established and protected, if its enemies are allowed publicly to profane and anathematize its most sacred ordinances and doctrines? Can we pretend the smallest



regard to the maintenance of these doctrines, if we countenance public popish schools for perverting youth, and allow seminary priests and Jesuits, who will compass sea and land to make proselytes, publicly to spread their abominable errors? As to the statutory provisions respecting the education of children of Papists, we may blush to hear them mentioned; while, to the praise of our forefathers, they show that Protestants had once some of that zeal for the true religion, which Papists have for the false; they also put us in mind that these times are now no more.

“The last restriction with regard to heritable property, is no less wise and necessary. In every country the possession of land must give influence in the government. In a free country like this, they are in a great degree inseparable. Unless therefore we wish again to be under the government of Papists, we must preserve this limitation. It may be said, there are other limitations which, independent of this, will keep our Papists from any share in the government. But suppose them possessed of a great part of the landed property, no other limitations can ever bind them. If, in their present situation, they can so easily get the walls of our constitution broken down, it will then be no great difficulty to get the gates thrown open.”

To this pamphlet an answer was published by Principal Campbell of Aberdeen, under the form of ‘An Address to the People of Scotland, upon the Alarms which have been raised in regard to Popery.’ Its views on the spiritual nature of Christ’s kingdom are admirable. He first of all ascertains the meaning of the word “persecution,” and then “inquires into its lawfulness on the principles of Christianity.” His pamphlet is as far superior to that of his opponents in its truly Christian spirit, as it is in its talent and literature. Taking not “the Scots Statute Book,” but “the New Testament,” for which, says he, “we all profess the profoundest veneration,” he thus meets the alarmists: “But say our opponents in this argument, Popery is a superstition so baneful as not to deserve any favour, especially at the hands of Protestants. Its intolerance to them, and persecuting spirit, if there were nothing else we had to accuse it of, would be sufficient to justify the severest treatment we could give it. This treatment to Papists could not be called persecution, but just retaliation, or the necessary means of preventing perdition to ourselves. I do not say that either Popery or Papists deserve favour from us. On the contrary, I admit the truth of the charge against them,

but not the consequences ye would draw from it. Let Popery be as black as ye will. Call it Beelzebub, if ye please. It is not by Beelzebub that I am for casting out Beelzebub, but by the Spirit of God. We exclaim against Popery, and in exclaiming against it, we betray but too manifestly, that we have imbibed of the character for which we detest it. In the most unlovely spirit of Popery, and with the unhallowed arms of Popery, we would fight against Popery. It is not by such weapons that God has promised to consume *the man of sin*, but it is by *the breath of his mouth*, that is, *his word*. As for us, though we be often loud enough in our pretensions to faith, our faith is not in his word. We have no faith now in weapons invisible and impalpable. Fire and steel suit us a great deal better. Christians, in ancient times, confided in the divine promises; we, in these days, confide in acts of parliament. They trusted to the sword of the Spirit, for the defence of truth and the defeat of error; we trust to the sword of the magistrate. God's promises do well enough, when the legislature is their surety. But if ye destroy the hedges and the bulwarks which the laws have raised, we shall cry with Israel in the days of Ezekiel, 'Behold, our bones are dried, our hope is lost, we are cut off for our parts.' There is no more security for the true religion. Protestantism is gone! all is lost! We shall all be Papists presently. Shall we never reflect on the denunciation of the prophet, 'Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord.' Let me tell those people, so distrustful in God's providence and promises, and so confident in the arm of flesh, that the true religion never flourished so much, never spread so rapidly, as when, instead of persecuting, it was persecuted, instead of obtaining support from human sanctions, it had all the terrors of the magistrate and of the laws armed against it. 'Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy; are we stronger than he?'"\*

When the General Assembly met, Earl Dalhousie, as royal commissioner, in his opening speech, "told the Assembly that he had His Majesty's command to assure them that His Majesty would not countenance any attempt to alter the laws respecting Popery in Scotland—that His Majesty's ministers would give no encouragement to the attempt, and that every idea to repeal the penal laws against the Papists had been abandoned."† Burke, after-

\* Sermons and Tracts by George Campbell, D. D. 1824. P. 317.

† Scots Magazine, 1779.

wards, in his place in the House of Commons, did not fail "to point his keenest satire against the persecuting spirit of the Scotch clergy, and to censure the administration for the pusillanimous speech of the Lord High Commissioner, and for deserting their friends in the Assembly."\* The government section of the Assembly were broken and dispirited; not a few of the moderates wheeled round, and in the wake of the commissioner joined the popular party, and deserted their leaders. The House, with a few honourable exceptions, crouched to the power of popular tumults and violence. Principal Robertson maintained his rectitude of principle amid the desertion of his friends, while yet he granted that the measure was now highly inexpedient, as the public mind was so much excited. Still, with the noble fortitude of a patriot and Christian, he pled eloquently for the great principles of religious liberty. In the face of a frowning Assembly and enraged populace, he had to enter upon a defence of his own conduct in the matter; and had the mortification of being compelled to withdraw his motion, which was, that "the repeal of the Popish penal laws would be inexpedient on account of the murmurs and alarms of the people," that the Assembly might adopt another far more stringent against the Romanists. "It declared the firm persuasion of the Assembly, that a repeal of the laws now in force against Papists would be highly inexpedient, dangerous, and prejudicial to the best interests of religion and civil society in this part of the United Kingdom."

The treatment the Principal had met with from his fellow-citizens, for advocating the repeal of the Popish penal laws, as stated by himself in open court, was barbarous, inhuman, fiendish. It must be given in his own words. "While I thought a repeal of the penal statutes would produce good effects, I supported it openly; when I foresaw bad consequences from persisting in a measure which I had warmly approved, I preferred the public good to my own private sentiments; I honestly remonstrated against it; and I have the satisfaction to think, that I am the only private person (as far as I know) in Scotland, who applied to those in power, in order to prevent that much-dreaded repeal, which has been represented as the subversion of every sacred right for which our ancestors contended and suffered. In return for this, what is the recompence

\* Glasgow Mercury, June 15th, 1779.

I have received? My character as a man, as a citizen, and as a minister of the gospel, has been delineated in the most odious colours: I have been represented as a pensioner of the Pope, as an agent for Rome, as a seducer of my brethren to Popery, as the tool of a king and ministry bent on overturning the Protestant religion: In pamphlets, in newspapers, and handbills, I have been held out to an enraged mob, as the victim who deserved to be next sacrificed, after they had satiated their vengeance on a Popish bishop. My family has been disquieted; my house has been attacked; I have been threatened with pistols and daggers; I have been warned, that I was watched in my going out and coming home; the time has been set beyond which I was not to live; and, for several weeks, hardly a day passed on which I did not receive incendiary letters, more criminal than that for which an unhappy person is now under sentence of death in the capital of the kingdom. The judge by whom he was condemned, observed, with propriety, that such a crime appeared to him the most atrocious of any. A highwayman (said he) takes from you your money; a murderer puts an end to your days; but the writer of an incendiary letter embitters life itself, by robbing us of our repose. My repose, thank God, was not disturbed. I was conscious of no crime, and dreaded no danger. I continued in my usual habits of life. I went about as usual; and last night was the first time my family ever heard of the threats which had been denounced against me. One circumstance, however, afflicted and filled me with horror. Several of the incendiary letters which I received were signed by 'Lovers of Truth;' 'Friends to the Protestant Religion.' It was in the name of Jesus I was warned that my death was resolved, and the instruments for cutting short my days prepared. May God forgive the men who have disseminated among the pious and well-intentioned people of this country such principles, as led them to imagine that assassination could be acceptable to God, and prompted them to point a dagger to the breast of a fellow-christian, in the name of our merciful Saviour!

"To all the Rev. and Hon. members of this Assembly, I owe the most grateful acknowledgments for the indulgence and attention with which they have listened to this long detail. It is the first time I ever mentioned my own name in this house; I trust it shall be the last."\*

\* Scots Mag., p. 412. 1779.



Dr. Erskine, after the Assembly, sent to Burke a copy of the debate in the Assembly, and other papers, and sermons, containing the substance of the arguments which had been urged in Scotland against the repeal of the penal statutes, and from him he received a letter, which contained amongst others the following slashing paragraph :—" If I had the ability, which I have not, or the wish, which I hope I never shall have, for exciting popular tumults for the destruction of any set of people, I could not desire anything more elaborately composed, or more powerfully drawn from all the sources of eloquence, for that purpose, than some of the pieces you have sent me. It is not a cold caution for moderating our anger, or a refinement on the difference between a detestation of a man's principles, and a hatred of his person, that can save the objects of these sanguinary invectives from the blind fury of the multitude. To represent a man as immoral by his religion, perfidious by his principles, a murderer on a point of conscience, an enemy, even from piety, to the foundations of all social intercourse, and then tell us, that we are to offer no violence to such a person ; under favour, appears to me rather an additional insult and mockery, than any sort of corrective of the injury we do our neighbour, by the character we give him." \*

The Assembly of 1779 was indeed one altogether peculiar. It was so completely paralyzed by a vacillating administration, a dread of Popery, and popular cabals, that it did not divide upon a single question save on the election of the moderator. Everything was hushed over unanimously. It was while thus panic-struck, that Robert Gillespie, and his handful of donors, at last managed, after persevering six years, under the generalship of Dr. Erskine, to get the Rev. Mr. Gillespie's church received by the Assembly as a chapel-of-ease. The presbytery of Dunfermline opposed its reception as strongly as ever, on the ground that it was a factious schismatical business ; but amid the fierce " no Popery cry," when friends could not be distinguished from foes, and no man had courage to bring any matter to a vote, they secured their object. It was an inglorious victory over a people whom the Dunfermline presbytery declared " the donors had expelled from their place of meeting."

The arresting of the Popish bill for Scotland, at the bidding of riotous mobs, had a most pernicious influence upon the nation. It threatened to disorganize society, and break

\* Erskine's Life, p. 302.

the government of the country into pieces. Fox characterized the conduct of the administration as "despicable."

During the height of the clamouring in Scotland, the Honourable Lord George Gordon, a younger son of the Duke of Gordon, was elected President of their associations. With an ardour worthy of a better cause, he had personally visited Edinburgh, Glasgow, Anderston, Paisley, and Greenock, guided their movements, inflamed their zeal, and had in turn been feasted amid triumphal illuminations. Who, then, so fit to head a movement in England for the repeal of the law of Popish toleration, which the Scotch by violent and combined agitation prevented from being enacted? A Protestant association having been formed in London for this purpose, he was unanimously invited to become its chairman, and cheerfully complied with the invitation. Branch associations were formed throughout the country. Large subscriptions were uplifted. Thousands enrolled their names as members. The public mind became feverish. Fear was painted in every man's face, and the religious people in London and neighbourhood, were persuaded that the old burning scenes of Smithfield were about to begin. "No Popery," "Down with the Papists," "Repeal the Popish bill," became the watchwords. On the 2d of June, 1779, Lord George presented their petition, signed by 120,000, craving a repeal of the Popish toleration bill. He had taken care to muster the Protestant association on that day, and to get them to surround the House of Commons. The petitioners, six abreast, with blue cockades in their hats, dressed in their best clothes, to the number of fifty, or as some said, a hundred thousand, marched in four great divisions, with music and banners through the streets of London to the House of Commons, which they surrounded, filling its lobbies, maltreating its members, and shouting defiance at the top of their voice, while their leader was urging at the bar of the House that their petition should be taken into instant consideration. Every now and then he came to the top of the gallery stairs, and told them what was going on within, exhorting them to be peaceable, "pointing out how the Scotch, by steadfastness and firmness, had carried their point, and that they obtained no redress till they pulled down the mass houses." \*

It is easier to inflame a multitude than to control it. Evil disposed persons mingled with the Protestant crowd, and fanned the

\* Trial of Lord John Gordon.

flame. In the dusk of the evening, the mob acting upon the plan of the Scotch, indiscreetly referred to by their leader, took the law into their own hands, and burnt the Popish chapels of the Sardinian and Bohemian ambassadors, tearing down and destroying every rag of Popery with which they were ornamented. On Sabbath evening they again renewed their violence, burning the Popish chapel in Moorfields. From this time, for three days and three nights, the city of London was in the hands of a lawless and infuriated mob. The guardians of public security were panic-struck. The Lord Mayor hesitated to issue his orders. The constables refused to serve for the protection of Papists. It was London that was in a tumult, and London could not act against itself. Who would read the riot act, and call upon the military to fire against his brothers and sisters? The Lord Chancellor, Mansfield, saw his house, furniture, pictures, and library, all burnt before his eyes. He was helpless as a child. The houses of many other noblemen supposed to be favourable to the bill, were fired, and laid in ashes. To release some of their associates who had been incarcerated, several of the prisons were set fire to by the mob, so that all their prisoners were released. Distilleries, and houses containing great quantities of combustible materials, were sought out, and set on fire. In a great number of places, London was in flames, and the conflagration was spreading in all directions. To prevent its extinction, the water from the New River was attempted to be cut off. The bank of England was attacked. The public offices, the Exchange, the Pay office, and every repository of treasure, was threatened.

Anarchy was now complete. The vilest miscreants released from jails and bridewells ransacked the city. Men, women, and children, were seen running about the streets with whatever they considered most precious. Their cries were fearful. "Many fled from the town, leaving all their property behind them. Children were sent off in all kinds of vehicles, hired at any price." The sick, the aged, and the infirm, who could not be moved, or who had not the means to pay for removing themselves, were under the sad necessity of abiding the event, having the dreadful prospect before them of being torn in pieces by the rebellious malecontents, or expiring amid the flames of their burning houses. To bespeak the compassion of a frenzied, and by this time an intoxicated multitude, formed into gangs, breaking up and robbing houses, blue flags were hung out from many doors and windows, and almost

every house was scrawled over with, "No Popery," "God bless Lord George Gordon," and other Protestant watch-words. On the evening of Wednesday, writes an eye-witness: "The spectacle was awful. The King's Bench, Fleet prison, Borough Clink, and Surrey bridewell, were all in flames at the same moment, and their depraved inhabitants let loose to assist in the general havoc. Not less than *thirty-six* fearful conflagrations, in different parts of the metropolis, were seen raging simultaneously, licking up every thing in their way, and hastening to meet each other. These illuminations all ascending into the air, and consolidating together, formed an atmosphere of flames impressing the mind of the spectator with the idea, not only as if the whole metropolis was burning, but all nations yielding to the final consummation of all things."

On the evening of this day the public mind began to put on strength. Disastrous consequences stared every man in the face. Death at every man's door made every man think. The mob were either drunk, wearied out by fatigue, or were retreating into hiding-places to conceal their booty. The time was long since past, when it had become humane to call in the aid of the military. Without waiting for the order of a civil magistrate, the king and his council, the king particularly, commanded them to fire upon the midnight marauders, and in a very short time they were discomfited, driven from the streets, and the city was restored to a state of quiet. What a frightful thing, a whole city in the hands of a mob, spreading fire and desolation over the dwellings of the flying and screaming inhabitants!

The parliament acted so far with firmness, that it refused to repeal the obnoxious bill. A considerable number of the rioters were tried and executed. Lord George got off with a torch in his hand. His after life showed that his mind was disordered, and he became an object of pity rather than of blame. Ultimately, he professed to be a Jew, wore a long pendant beard, and died in prison.

To quiet down the public mind a bill was introduced into parliament to guard, as was said, the Protestant interest, but which only made it unlawful for Catholics, in particular circumstances, to superintend the education of Protestant children. The measure, though intended merely to soothe, by an imposing name, was still of very questionable utility. It was firmness, and not hollow flattery, which the nation required. Under the mask of



legislating for religious liberty, religious liberty was in great danger of being betrayed. England certainly had a bitter draught administered to her at this time by her sister, Scotland. It was the Scotch in London that headed the attempt at repeal. The Highland bagpipes, at the head of the first division, told the House of Commons that the Gordons were coming. The English statesmen long afterwards were loud in their invectives against Scotch bigotry and Presbyterian intolerance.\*

After the tumult in the public mind had somewhat subsided, Hutchison, in 1781, again ventured before the public with his last controversial pamphlet about the Covenants and Toleration, that he might answer Ramsay and Walker, who were still carrying on the war against Relief principles; and also, that he might give a side wipe to Brown of Haddington on 'The Absurdity and Perfidy of all Authoritative Toleration of Gross Heresy, Blasphemy, and Idolatry in Britain;' and particularly, that he might reply to Bell, who was considered a Relief writer, though at the time when he published 'The Lifting up of the Standard,' he was out of connection with the body. In his work, Bell had taken up ground very different from that which Hutchison had occupied, and he was not disposed by his silence to sanction any such deviation from Relief principles. Instead of becoming more bigoted against the Catholics during the Popish riots, Hutchison had made progress in his ideas of religious liberty. In his first publication he maintained that "Popery ought not to be tolerated in any Protestant state, nor the penal laws against it repealed; not so much on account of the errors of that superstition, as because of its persecuting and cruel genius, and because Papists are bound to keep no faith with heretics."† But, in his last publication, his views of toleration are far more liberal and enlightened. In opposition to Ramsay and Walker, Brown and Bell—all of whom argued for the right of the magistrate to defend religion and punish heretics—he contends that the person chosen to the office of the magistrate is constituted the head of the civil state, to rule his subjects in things of a worldly or civil nature, but that he does not become

\* Authorities. — Bell's Standard, Scots Acts, Cameronian's Warning, Scots Magazine, Chambers' Lives, Collection of Declarations, Minutes of Assembly, Pamphlet of the Edinburgh Committee of Correspondence, Lord George Gordon's Trial, Minutes of Procedure of the Eighty-four Glasgow Societies, Glasgow Mercury, Erskine's Life, Campbell's Address, &c.

† View of Relief System, Part iii., p. 14.

thereby the Lord of men's consciences in matters of religion, so as to punish them in their civil rights as members of the community, because they differ from him, or, it may be, from the rest of his subjects, on some religious tenets. Singling out Mr. Ramsay, as having broadly maintained "that the magistrate must not honour the erroneous with offices of *power* and *trust*," he says, "Before Mr. Ramsay trouble the world with any more of his sentiments on the subject of positive toleration, he would be wise to consider whether he can clearly prove the following points:—

1. What set of clergy, exclusive of others, have the right to determine the lucrative creed of state.
2. That this set of clergy, though fallible men themselves, will compose a perfect and infallible creed, including all revealed truth, and nothing but truth.
3. That after such a creed is composed, (which is scarcely to be expected in this world,) it is an appointment of the Head of the church, that none but those who understand, believe, and profess every article of this creed, should enjoy any offices in the civil government, though otherwise qualified for the discharge of them both in point of capacity and integrity.
4. That the profession of adherence to any human creed whatever, is, by Christ's authority, made the condition of enjoying civil offices under the gospel." \*

In opposition to all their intolerant maxims about toleration, Mr. Hutchison, in two sentences, lays down his views both as to the religious and civil rights of mankind. "1. Those who are good and peaceable subjects of the civil state, should be allowed the free exercise of their religion, according to that information of truth and duty which they have received from the word of God. 2. The offices of the civil state, ought, without respect of persons, to be conferred upon those members of the community who appear best qualified, in point of ability and integrity, to discharge them, to whatever denomination of Protestants they belong." † It will be observed that he still confines "*offices* of the civil state to *Protestants*," to the exclusion, of course, of Papists; but what a difference, when, in his publication three years before, he would not even *tolerate* them as citizens, nor allow of the repeal of the penal laws against them! In this his last publication, written after the frenzy of the public mind had somewhat subsided, he never mentions the Romanists even by name; and utters no in-

\* Animadversions, p. 23.

† Ib. p. 24.

vectives against their dangerous and anti-government principles. If he had still a little of the leaven about him of what was called "negative toleration;" yet his views accorded with the tenor of the Popish bill, and certainly he was far a-head of the great body of the community, who were still circumscribing to a religious class the rights of citizenship as well as the offices of state.

In the conclusion of his 'Animadversions,' he fastens on Bell's volume 'On Lifting up the Standard;' and, though he does not name him or his book, he selects all his strong points, which, he says, are "weakly put," and rapidly demolishes them. The panacea of Bell for resisting Popery was the renewal of the Covenants; and, as national covenants had no authority in the New Testament, he had endeavoured to prove that vowing and covenanting were the same,—that vowing was not contrary to the gospel economy,—and that by engaging in a *national vow* against Popery, the obligation on the public mind to resist it would be thereby increased.

Hutchison takes him up at the very threshold of his argument. He denies that religious vowing and religious swearing are the same. "A vow is a solemn promise made to God to do something that is lawful to be done." "An oath is a solemn appeal to God with respect to the *sincerity* of the swearer, and an invocation of him as a witness and avenger of insincerity and falsehood. Vowing was lawful under all the three dispensations; but swearing, as an act of worship, was peculiar to the Jews, as God was their King, and required from them an oath of allegiance." "Christ himself, his apostles, and all the primitive churches vowed to God, or promised obedience to him, which is the whole of a vow. No religious worship or obedience can be performed, in an acceptable manner, without vows expressed or implied, essential or formal. But neither Christ, his apostles, nor the first Christian churches, swore to God, as far as we are informed in the New Testament. There is not one single precept or recommendation to this purpose in the whole New Testament; nor does anything of it appear in the example of Christ, who performed all the duties of the divine law; nor can we behold the least vestige of it in the footsteps of the flock, in the New Testament writings, though both the apostles, and the churches planted by them, were most exemplary in all the branches of the gospel-worship." \*

\* Animadversions, p. 108.

The general cry at that time was, Let us swear the covenants, and thus bring ourselves under new *obligations* to resist Popery. Mr. Bell strenuously argued in this way. His influence, from his learning and weight of character, was great. Hutchison, therefore, sifted his arguments, blew away the chaff, and showed that the residue of wheat that remained was small indeed. He maintained that no man could add to the obligations of God's law by any vow which he could make. The law was perfect. It bound every moral duty upon us by ties which man could not make firmer. It was impious to say that man could, by his vows, supply the defects of God's authority. All that a vow can do is merely to impress, and render more *lively*, our sense of duty. Our obligation to pray is the same, whether we vow or not; our obligation to give charity is the same, whether we vow or not; our excitements, however, to perform them may be increased by a promise which we have made, and this is all that can be attributed to a vow. The duty is the same, the motives are the same, but the motives to the duty may be stirred up; and where they are *lively*, there is the greater sin in resisting them.

Still, even in regard to formal congregational *vowing*, the same scriptural objection starts up as in regard to congregational swearing. Is there an example in the New Testament of a church or nation setting aside a day, and coming before the Lord and solemnly subscribing with their hands a vow as an act of worship to do some particular thing? They vowed in effect to serve the Lord together in the ordinances of the Supper and in prayer, and in other religious ordinances; but where is the pattern of a congregation meeting for *vowing* at stated times, for bringing themselves under obligations for doing a particular service, such as extirpating Popery, or resisting Socinianism?

The cutting way in which Mr. Hutchison took leave of Mr. Bell and his book against Popery, has a great deal of edge in it, and must have been felt. Mr. Bell had his own temper, and could make a keen retort. He had pled strongly for covenanting being a moral duty, and a new obligation superinduced upon the law of God, and yet he declares, as has been noticed, that "he does not make these things terms of communion." Whereupon Hutchison says, "Another prodigy is, that a new obligation man has lately endeavoured to prove to the world that religious swearing is a moral duty, but he is not for making it a term of communion; yea, though the greatest part of his



book is professedly written against the Papists and their religion, yet he declares in his Preface, ‘ That he does not view his sentiments as a term of Christian communion :’ consequently, if he speaks truth after all his pretended opposition to the good Papists, the difference between them and him, in point of religion, will not hinder him from holding communion with them. And though his sentiments are against Socinianism and Arianism, as he does not consider them as terms of Christian communion according to his professed principles, the Socinians and Arians will be cordially admitted by him to sealing ordinances.

“ But if he is not willing to make religious swearing a term of communion, though he holds it to be a moral duty, and declares his willingness to hold communion with those who deny it to be a moral duty, may he not, upon the same principle, hold communion with them who deny any other moral duty of the divine law? for why should any one precept of the law be more respected than another? And if one precept of the moral law is not to be made a term of communion, for the same reason the whole ten commandments should not be made terms of communion, and then we shall have terms of Christian communion as open and extensive as the tribe of libertines can desire; and in this manner, by improving in the doctrine of *new obligations* different from the moral law, we may, perhaps, in process of time, get clear of all its *old obligations*. And indeed this new obligation writer could not, consistently with his avowed principles, refuse sealing ordinances to any, though they denied all the ten commandments; for though he believes every one of them himself to be of divine authority, yet he declares ‘ that he does not consider his sentiments as a term of Christian communion.’ ” \*

It was long before the effects of this antipopish controversy in the different churches in Scotland were fully developed. Like most other human things, they were partly good and partly evil. Among the great majority of Protestants, more liberal and enlightened opinions began henceforward to gain ground, but a few were driven back upon more bigoted notions with an increasing dread of Popery, and ultimately separated from the larger sections of the Seceders on the power of the civil magistrate in religious matters. At this period the elements of contention and division began to work, and to manifest the symptoms of a coming storm.

\* *Animadversions*, p. 120.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### GENERAL ATTEMPT TO GET QUIT OF PATRONAGE—INCREASE OF THE RELIEF—BUCHANITES—SLAVE TRADE.

THE national mind of Scotland was greatly elevated, by the decided triumph which was obtained, as to the Popish bill. They had never before seen the power of combined and vigorous exertion in controlling the government, and carrying a national measure. The whole country being organized, the people resolved to keep up the system of organization, and as they had managed to shut out Papists from the rights of citizenship, so they determined they would now expel the last remnant of Popery from their national church. Patronage had long been complained of as a grievance, and was considered as a part of the system of Popery, which at the Reformation had passed into the hands of "lay patrons," and which ought to have been purged out. They were resolved that the Church of Scotland should henceforward be a *free*, pure, sound Protestant church, and submit to no Popish yoke whatever.

In the spring of 1782, a society was organized in Glasgow, which took to itself the name of "The Constitutional Society of Correspondence." Its object was to obtain "an immediate redress of patronage. It was not to operate through the church courts, but, like its type and predecessor, "it was to correspond with all the parishes in Scotland," to stir them up, and get them all at one time, and with one voice, "to petition the legislature to repeal the iniquitous law of patronage." The presidents of the eighty-five societies in Glasgow, who had been of so great use in arresting the Popish bill, again met, and threw all the weight of their influence into this new society, which was only the old society under a new name. Eleven hundred circular letters were sent throughout Scotland. The different parishes were to correspond with them rather than publish their resolutions separ-

ately in the newspapers, that they might know their strength, and take their measures accordingly. A similar society was formed at Falkirk, which also sent a circular to all the parishes in that quarter of Scotland, and became a focus likewise of agitation and of influence. A third was formed in Edinburgh; and all were to co-operate for one great object—the removal of the yoke of patronage, which had descended from Rome.

Various circumstances were favourable for making a united effort, besides the important fact of the anti-popish machinery being still in existence, and ready to be turned against patronage. After a long train of decisions, for thirty years in the Assembly, patronage had become the law of the church, as well as the law of the land. The Assembly of 1780 had carried the matter higher than ever it had been before. In the case of the parish of Biggar which came before them, “the call was a sheet of blank paper without a single name.” Out of 1,200 parishioners, no elder nor head of a family would give the slightest encouragement to the presentee. After eleven months, a few persons, and the most of them Episcopalians, promised, by letter, to subscribe the call. “This circumstance was eagerly laid hold of by the zealous friends of patronage, who strongly averred, that these letters were equal to a call, and ought to be considered as such.—There were others who spoke out, and said, that there was no need for a call at all;—that as the law of patronage stood, the presentee was entitled to the benefice, and the church was obliged to collate, if no objections were offered and proved against his life and doctrine.”\* The Assembly enjoined his settlement with all convenient speed. The people left him to uplift the emoluments, and erected for themselves a Relief church.

The settlement of Fenwick, in the same year, was still worse. When the person to be presented preached two Sabbaths, that the people might prove his gifts, before his call was moderated, the whole congregation, on both days, consisted of only the presentee and precentor, and on the day appointed for the moderation, no person appeared to sign the call, but the factor of the patron, to sign for his master. The presbytery of Irvine were ordered to proceed with the settlement, and the commission were enjoined to see it executed. The Assembly of 1781 “carried the matter to a more extravagant pitch,” (if that was possible,) “by ordering

\* Narrative of the General Assembly, 1780, by J. Burn. P. 7.

several young men to be settled in vacant parishes by presentations alone, without the shadow of a call from the parishioners.”\* In several cases, presbyteries did not even attempt to go through the empty form of moderating a call. The presentation was considered sufficient. The plan of procedure had been introduced into the Assembly by Dr. Robertson at the deposition of Gillespie; and while he could manage things with the perfect bearing of a gentleman, yet he had never swerved from that policy which he had considered constitutional in the church, as established by law. The leader of the Assembly, however, was leader no more. He never appeared in it again after 1780. He retired from his distinguished position in the vigour of life. The anti-popish party had, to all appearance, driven him from the helm. During this national mania he had been baffled in the Assembly, and deserted by his own friends. At the close of his memorable speech, in which he defended his conduct at great length, in reference to the Popish bill, he thanked the Assembly, as already related, for their indulgence, and the attention with which they had listened to him, and then he pointedly added—“It is the first time I ever mentioned my own name in this house; I trust it shall be the last.” Even his appeal to their sympathy, and his kind of implied threat of withdrawal, failed. He could not carry his motion, and he had too long been the first man in the Assembly to condescend to be the second. Some of his friends, as we shall yet see, were pressing him to relax the terms of the formula in signing the Confession of Faith, to which he could not accede. On his retirement the people, who had always regarded him as the great break-water of the patrons, thought they would now sweep all before them.

Besides, Fox and the whigs were now in office, and high expectations of popular measures were cherished throughout the country. “From that liberality of, and that regard to, the rights of mankind, which His Majesty’s present ministers have uniformly shown since their entrance into office, we may form no slender hope, that a request so reasonable will obtain at least a fair hearing.”† As it was intended to go direct to parliament, and not through the medium of church courts, in whom they declared they had no confidence, “the Dissenters cordially joined in the measure.”‡ The object of this general combination was to seek the destruc-

\* Glasgow Circular.

† Falkirk Circular.

‡ Ibid.



tion of patronage; but they were far from being agreed, as their published resolutions testify, how or by whom the elective franchise was to be exercised.

The synod of Relief, at its meeting in 1782, resolved to give its aid to the societies, which were struggling for the redress of the grievance of patronage. It passed the following resolution, which it ordered to be inserted into the Edinburgh and Glasgow newspapers. "The synod of Relief having met, and being informed that several societies through the nation are beginning to concert measures for applying to the legislature for a redress of the grievance of patronage, cordially approve of those measures, and express their willingness to co-operate with the different societies of their Christian brethren through Scotland, by every constitutional mean, to carry forward a scheme so salutary,—a scheme which, it is hoped, may be productive of the most beneficial consequences to the interest of religion, and the liberty and peace of the nation. The synod are encouraged to hope that such an application will be attended with the most desirable success, when they consider the mild and lenient dispositions of that excellent person who fills the British throne, and of his ministers; the more especially as Ireland, our sister kingdom, is now applying to parliament for a redress of their grievances, and in a fair way to have their most sanguine desires gratified."

Like many other plans for the abolition of patronage, all the efforts of the country ended in smoke, and the galling yoke of patronage was thereby more firmly bound round the neck of Scotland. Every struggle showed more clearly than before that the law of the land recognised it, and that it was the chief connecting link between the church and the state. Fox, to whom all eyes were turned for redress of the grievance, resigned the seals of office before he had well received them, in consequence of a quarrel with Lord Shelburne. The antipatronage movement went on with greatly diminished prospects of success.

The clergy did not allow the people to fight the battle alone. A great number of overtures were sent up from different synods, and the popular party in the Assembly resolved to mingle in the strife, though the people would have considered their silence sound discretion.

The moderate side of the house was without a head. Dr. Macknight was putting forward his pretensions to stand in the room of Robertson. He was disposed to abate somewhat from

the policy of his predecessor, and to consider a *call* from the people indispensable. Hardy, who published this year (1782) his 'Principles of Moderation,' was also willing to make a surrender of some things to "the popular interest," and tried by smooth language to cajole them into a half popular measure. The patron, by his delegate, was to have one vote,—the heritors another, and the session a third, and these were to elect the minister. It was an old plan burnished up anew. These symptoms betrayed weakness and timidity in the moderate party. The dread of the anti-popish combination had not yet subsided in its stupendous effects upon the public mind. Principal Hill of St. Andrews, as the leader of a large section of the Assembly, took the old constitutional ground of Dr. Robertson, whose plan of ecclesiastical policy he had studied, adopted, and admired. Dr. Macknight and his followers, however, would not own his leadership; and the popular party and they having united, Hill was outvoted. This was not very flattering to the man whom the greater part of the moderates wished to be their new leader. But he was not to be worsted because he had been vanquished in the first skirmish. Without saying which of these new leaders was the more learned—and both of them were highly respectable—Dr. Hill was by far the better fitted of the two to control a popular assembly. He was intimately acquainted with the laws of the church. He was dignified, hospitable, and accessible. Before next assembly he made himself sure of the views of the government by corresponding with Lord Kinnoul; and when the subject came before them again, in 1783, he took the high ground of moving the dismissal of all overtures against patronage, and sweeping them at once beneath the table. He was resolved to countenance no half measures, and he scorned to tantalize the public mind with expectations which the government would not grant; and which they, as a church-court, could not fulfil to the people, as patronage was the law of the land. His motion to put an end to the anti-patronage movement, was carried by an immense majority. Being resolved to push his victory, establish his authority, and free himself from the trammels of hypocritical forms, he also induced the assembly, without a division, to leave out "the clause in the instructions hitherto given annually to the commission, which required it to apply to parliament at any convenient season for deliverance from the grievance of patronage." The matter, by these vigorous mea-

tures, was set at rest ; no attempt being afterwards made against patronage, or the act supporting it.”\* The victory must have been complete. A most surprising change from this time forward seems to have come over the mind of the popular party, for Sir H. Moncrieff, who was long its leader, has said,—“ The great majority of the church are convinced, that the system of patronage, so long resisted in the church-courts, is at last completely established. Even many of those individuals, who held a different doctrine, thirty or forty years ago, do not think it expedient, in the present times, to revive a controversy, which such a long series of decisions in the supreme court is held to have settled. It appears to them, that, at this distance of time, the revival of the controversy would not only contribute nothing to lessen the evils which they still impute to the system which has been so long acted upon ; but that, without any real advantage to the country, it would aggravate the difficulties which occur, in effectuating the induction of individual presentees, and add greatly to the irritations, which serve so much to distract, and to divide the people.”†

While this great anti-patronage contest terminated in bringing the law of the church into harmony with the law of the state in the settlement of ministers, it had yet indirectly a favourable influence among many of the people upon the great question of religious liberty. The history, nature, and effects of patronage became matters of public discussion. Parishes ceased to agitate and appeal against an intruder, for they knew what would be the decision. Violent settlements came to an end. People quietly withdrew from the church where patronage was the law and practice ; built for themselves churches, and called ministers to dispense religious ordinances according to the model contained in the New Testament ; while those who loved patronage quietly sat still in the parish churches. The Relief interest now spread with great rapidity ; and nothing prevented the synod from erecting places of worship in all the principal towns in Scotland, but a difficulty in supplying them when built with ministers.

The general cry is, that persons became Dissenters, about this time, solely because of the grievance of patronage. The cry conveys a false impression. The preliminary question is, what did they understand by patronage ? The most intelligent class by far

\* Cook's Life of Hill, p. 161.

† ‘ Erskine's Life,’ Appendix, p. 466.

in the community at the time were the manufacturers of Glasgow; and their resolutions, published in 1782, show that they considered patronage the very essence of an Establishment, and that they must get quit of the one by giving up the other. After stating that the term, "patron," was known in the Roman republic before the New Testament church had an existence; and that it signified a person who manumitted a slave, who expected some tribute of gratitude, and became his protector,—and also that a patron signified a person who defended the rights of the Roman poor,—and in none of which senses is it used in the canon, or ecclesiastical law; they thus proceed:—"In none of these ancient senses does the church acknowledge any other patron than our Lord Jesus Christ; for while church members have a title to enjoy all their rights, civil and sacred, under the auspicious patronage of the civil magistrate, yet they possess this as men, and as a debt due to them as good subjects, which their religion cannot fail to make them. This is all the civil magistrate can do for the church: and it is enough, in all reason, if designing churchmen had thought it enough.

"But no sooner had the Roman emperor declared himself a Christian; had given rest unto the Christian subjects from persecution; and out of the abundance of his mistaken zeal for religion had loaded the ministers of the church with honours, preferments, and riches, then they finding themselves warm in their seats, began to exult over their fellow-christians and office-bearers, to engage the secular power to interpose upon the slightest differences among them, and to crush the party that had the misfortune to be saddled with the epithets of heretic and schismatic by the factions in favour, whether they were right or wrong.

"Hence division and wars filled the world, to the scandal of religion, or rather the professors of it; hence the original of civil establishments of religion; of the great patronage, which we may, for distinction, call imperial, as it has been the mother of every other kind of patronage, ever named in the church of Christ. In one word, hence was gendered the apocalyptic beast mentioned Rev. xiii. 1, 2.

"Hence patronage was carried till about the fifth century, the clergy of the western churches did not think themselves very safe in the possession of their wealth, as the Roman empire was in an unsettled state by the inundation of the northern nations,



and therefore they thought proper to address the emperor by two different councils, to grant that some holy and powerful men might be appointed by the church, to act in office for the defence of the church's patrimony, against all invaders; which accordingly was granted, and these were dignified with the ancient and honourable title of patron: hence the protection of the church, (or, if you please,) the wealth of the clergy, was the original, essential, and constitute part of that character; such was the state of patronage; such the power intrusted with patrons for some centuries; but as yet they had not their full complement of authority in the church.

“ The patron was not as yet to his zenith; he had not as yet given gifts to ecclesiastic men, nor had received the power to give ministers to the church. Now the Christian people had the choice of the clergy, from the Pope to the parish priest; for a long time after the church was made an integral part of the civil state, and thereby became imperial. However, in the process of time the clergy themselves became the electors into vacancies, and had seized upon the people's rights, taking advantage of their ignorance, and persuading them they were not fit to choose for themselves; this grew into custom, and was established thereby into a law. Now began the simoniacal trade! the clergy had the people's rights lying upon their hands, bethought themselves of a scheme to enlarge the circle of trade by getting a greater plenty of churches, they proposed to noblemen, gentlemen, &c., that whoever at their own expense would build a church, and dote it with church lands, should have the right of presentation unto that living vested in his person, heirs or his assigns for ever.

“ The scheme took, churches were built, and richly doted, and those who did it were honoured with the name of patron, complimented by a simoniacal clergy with the stolen rights of the Christian people, and had liberty from them, by virtue of their bargain, in their respective charters, to invert the people's rights as their own. This was the state of patronage at the reformation from popery, when it was at its zenith in all nations under the influence of the Roman see, as well as in Scotland.”

Men holding such sentiments as these were far advanced in the science of church and state politics, and had gone in theory to the very root of the matter. Had they lived in 1834, as they lived in 1782, they would have been called voluntaries, and the enemies of all establishments. If such men as these deserted the

church for patronage, yet it was not for that lay-patronage which is condemned by many of the established clergy now. The same word, when used by the one or the other, has a very different meaning.

The Relief synod had now increased so much, that a fourth presbytery was erected in 1781, by disjoining several churches from the Glasgow Presbytery, and constituting them the Presbytery of St. Ninians.

According as a religious denomination increases, its liability to suffer from heresy, fanaticism, or immorality is also proportionally augmented. The greater the breadth of ground that is covered with wheat, the more numerous the tares. The truth of this humbling fact was experienced by the Relief in the midst of its flattering success.

In the year 1781, the Rev. Hugh White, a native of the parish of St. Ninians, and a licentiate of the Church of Scotland, was received into connection with the Relief synod. He was speedily called, and ordained to the pastorate of the Relief church, Irvine. The settlement was harmonious; and though his talents and acquirements were not of the first order, he was pretty much esteemed as a preacher. He delighted, however, rather to speak from Sinai than from Zion. Like men of this stamp, he was vain of his own attainments while he was denouncing others with the terrors of the law. Being easily puffed up, he suffered himself to be cajoled and drawn aside by the flattery of Mrs. Buchan, an artful fanatic, and thus gained to himself a notoriety which his slender talents, in the ordinary discharge of duty, would never have won; but which after all was rather a matter of humiliation than of honour.

The maiden name of Mrs. Buchan was Elspat Simpson. She was the daughter of John Simpson, innkeeper at Fetney-Can—the half-way house between Banff and Portsoy. She was born about the year 1740. Her life might be chronicled in a few sentences. She left her native place when about twenty years of age, came to Glasgow, engaged in service, and married Robert Buchan, a workman in the Delfwork, Broomielaw. She belonged, at the time of her marriage, to the Scotch Episcopalians, but her husband being a Burgher Seceder she adopted his principles, and was admitted into communion with the Secession. These facts would, in ordinary circumstances, constitute the sum of her history; but as she laid claim to the gift of inspiration from her

earliest years, and attempted to be the founder of a new religious sect, she has garnished her own story with magniloquent words and high sounding pretensions. She thus gives the outlines of her own history to a clergyman in England :—

“As I have no education I cannot write you in a learned style, and I can dictate nothing but what I have been taught of God.” She then proceeds to inform him that “her mother according to the flesh died when she was two years of age. Her father married again. She was neither fed, nor clothed, nor educated by parents according to the flesh, but he who feeds the ravens, clothes the lilies, teaches babes, prepared a goodly heritage for me, and made Jesus Christ my tutor.” She had a vision in the fields, “how death came into the world,” when she was about six or seven years of age. Again, when she was about thirty-four, according to her own mystic language, “the power of God wrought so powerfully upon all my senses, that it overcame the flesh so much that I could not make use of earthly food for some weeks, which made all who saw me conclude that I was to depart this life, and many came to hear me speak, which was all about God’s love in Christ Jesus to men and women.”\*

Mrs. Buchan was first introduced to Mr. White at the Glasgow April sacrament 1783. “When my whole soul,” says she, “was at the first filled with the mysteries of the kingdom of God, which the world calls strange doctrine, I, as soon as I was able to walk, (she had been weakened by the vision and want of food,) went from kirk to kirk to hear what they said, for I saw such a new light in the Bible that I wondered where my eyes had been before. In the course of providence I saw Mr. Hugh White preaching in a church in Glasgow, (Mr. Bell’s,) on that portion of scripture, ‘Sanctify yourselves, for to-morrow will the Lord do wonders among you.’ I thought he was a greater advocate for holiness and enemy to sin than ever I had heard before, so that my soul was so filled with love to him that I could get no rest till I wrote him, and carried on a correspondence by letters weekly for the space of four months before ever he saw me face to face.”†

By her artful conversation she managed to gain him over to her views. She deserted her husband, went to Irvine, and be-

\* Eight Letters between the People called Buchanites and a Teacher near Edinburgh, pp. 36–38. Edin. 1785.

† Page 41.

came an inmate of Mr. White's family. His wife, which is remarkable, was also fascinated with her, and became her convert. Mr. White was speedily observed to change his doctrine, and to preach another gospel. The leading persons of the congregation were dissatisfied, met, and tracing up the change, which was every Sabbath becoming more apparent, to the influence of Mrs. Buchan, sent a deputation earnestly entreating him to dismiss her; but he was now so enamoured of her mystic views, that he declared "he would sooner cut off his right arm; but they need put themselves to no trouble, for if the majority of his church were dissatisfied he would go away."\* Like other heretics in resigning their churches, his first words were the most generous. When it came to the point that he must either renounce his novel opinions or give up his charge, he clung to his church with great tenacity, disregarding the sentence of suspension passed by the presbytery, so that they were compelled to frame a libel, and strip him of the office of the ministry, until he renounced his heresies. During his trial he maintained with unflinching firmness, that what the presbytery called errors were precious truths, and that he ought not to be tested by the doctrines of the Confession of Faith, but by the word of God—of course, understanding the word of God not as the synod understood it, but as he chose to interpret it. In his own estimation he received gross injustice. With the greatest inconsistency he was eagerly desirous to retain his salary as a Relief minister, while yet he taught doctrines subversive of those he had engaged to inculcate.

Mr. White, though deposed from the office of the ministry, still continued to reside in Irvine, and laboured zealously by preaching and otherwise, along with Mrs. Buchan, to propagate his fanatical opinions. They often met in the night time, sung hymns, which was a great part of their worship, and the uninitiated were instructed in the new faith by the pretended prophetess. In a small place like Irvine, such unseasonable meetings were first the gossip of the town—then they were given out to be scenes of licentious revelries—and latterly popular fury burst forth and broke the windows and furniture of the house where they met, and would have even proceeded to greater extremities, had the magistrates not interposed to preserve the public peace. After repeated applications to have her apprehended and pro-

\* Irvine Relief Session Minutes.



ceeded against as a blasphemer, she was early one morning, in April 1784, dismissed from the town, accompanied by several of her faithful and avowed adherents. The magistrates conducted them safely without the bounds of the borough. The youthful rabble, following behind, pelted the Buchanites at parting with dirt and stones, and otherwise testified their contempt for their opinions.

Their departure took place so suddenly, and so much were they under the impression that the coming of Christ and the end of all things were at hand, that some of them walked away leaving their doors open, their clothes at the well, and their cow in the “*tether*.” They were not cast down. They walked along the public highway in a little band, singing such hymns as the following,—

“ We march, and we sound,  
Our trumpets around,  
We’ll all in short time in sweet glory be found.  
Though many do press us,  
We ne’er look about,  
Though Satan distress us, we still keep our route.  
We never shall fly,  
Nor yet shall we die,  
Our warfare’s below, and our peace is on high.  
Well armed we stand,  
And God by our hand,  
Our armour’s immortal, and God does command.  
While God leads the van,  
We never fear man,  
O bright shall shine glory, for bright is the dawn.”\*

The first night they stopped in the neighbourhood of Kilmaurs. Being joined next morning by Mr. White and a few others, they proceeded on their pilgrimage, which they hoped would soon become their ascent to heaven. Like other poor mortals, however, they ascended and descended, as the road went up hills or down into valleys, without feeling any tendency to rise in the air, till they came to the parish of Closeburn, Dumfries-shire, where they took up their abode for a season, till they had more faith in the coming of Christ, and were more assimilated to pure spirit, that they might mount like angels to the dwelling-place of God.

The persons who came from Irvine were mostly females.

\* Divine Dictionary, p. 113.

Among them were a few men who were highly respectable in character, easy in their worldly circumstances, and who appeared to be influenced by motives purely religious. Even Mr. Hunter, the fiscal of Irvine, was drawn away with the party for a season. They were also joined by Charles Edward Conyers from England, a lieutenant of marines, who resigned his commission in His Majesty's service, and came and took up his abode with Mrs. Buchan, at the farm of New-Cample, Closeburn, near Thornhill, waiting for "the glorious return of the only begotten Son of God." A few others came from the Border counties; but the whole party never amounted to more than fifty.

The conversion of Conyers was a great accession. Letters poured in upon them from various quarters. They could number at least one countess among their correspondents, and several clergymen of the Church of England. Their ambition to be known *in this world*, whatever their notions of a translation, in the clouds, *to another*, made them very desirous to answer all the inquiries which were put to them, and to spread their fame; and therefore they began vauntingly to publish their correspondence, and to print their notions and revelations for general distribution. They issued from the press two numbers of "The Divine Dictionary; or, a Treatise indited by Holy Inspiration, concerning the Faith and Practice of that People (by this world) called Buchanites, who are actually waiting for the second coming of our Lord, and who believe that they, alive, shall be changed and translated 'into the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall be ever with the Lord,' 1 Thess. iv. 17. 'And there appeared a great wonder in heaven, a woman,' Rev. xii. 1." The attestation attached to the Divine Dictionary, of which the above is the title-page, is a humbling and revolting exhibition of simplicity, presumption, and blasphemy. "The truths contained in this publication the writer received from the Spirit of God in that woman, predicted Rev. xii. 1. Though they are not written in the same simplicity as delivered—by a babe in the love of God, HUGH WHITE. Revised and approved of by ELSPAT SIMPSON." \*

Their worst enemies could not have advised them to do anything more injurious to their reputation and success than to write a book. It showed them to be illiterate, erroneous, visionary, and

\* Divine Dictionary, p. 124.

rhapsodical. So little reason was mingled up with their madness, that it is often impossible to comprehend their ravings, and to say what exactly, on various topics, was their belief.

They aimed at what they called a literal interpretation of the scriptures. Their cardinal doctrine was, that Christ would come personally at the millennium, which was just at hand, and that they would be taken up to meet him in the air, and that being transformed into his glorious likeness, they would reign with him a thousand years in a new heaven and a new earth, before the wicked were raised, and judged, and condemned, at the last day. Their favourite passage was Heb. ix. 28, "Unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation."

None of those "looking" for the second coming of Christ were to taste of death. To hasten the approach of Christ, they put themselves into the position of waiters or expectants. They renounced, as they said, the world: they ate little or no food, that they might attenuate their bodies for the expected translation: they gave up all labour, and depended for support, like the fowls of heaven, upon God; they renounced all earthly connections, and ceased to know each other as husband and wife; they had a marked dislike at marriage, living pure, they said, as the angels. Two of their company having got married in a covert way, the birth of their first child was like firing a cannon amid a screaming flock of sea-fowl. Their general principle was to realize in their minds the idea of how the saints would live in heaven, and to reduce it to practice; for they held, that till there was such a body of spiritualized persons living and waiting for the coming of Jesus, he would not come. If they could just get themselves perfectly conformed to their notions of heaven, and lived as pure, celestial beings, Christ, they said, would immediately come. This kept them perpetually on the stretch, and made them aim at something higher and higher than what they had hitherto reached.

Their general doctrinal sentiments were very confused, though attempted to be moulded and fashioned by their cardinal principle,—the second and immediate coming of Jesus. They denied the doctrine of the divine decrees, the substitution of Christ in room of his people, salvation by faith in his righteousness, the existence of the human soul separate from the body, the remains of sin in the heart after conversion, and the

propriety of a converted person praying for the pardon of his sins. Man they held was a simple material substance, and not composed of soul and body. God breathed life at first into man; Satan, at the fall, breathed into him death; and Christ came, and, by his Spirit, again breathed into him life. Whosoever believed their doctrine got spiritual life in Christ—was filled with divine love; and by contemplating the love of God in Christ, he was assimilated to his likeness—became a spiritual person altogether free from sin—rejoiced in God, sang hymns of gladness, and was waiting in ecstacy, raised above all worldly pursuits, for the glorious second coming of Christ, and would never see death.

“In a tour of many thousand miles,” writes Mr. White, who had once been in America, to a clergyman in England, “I thought, in several different kingdoms, that I had seen many Christians; and as I was considerably addicted to prayer, and conversing concerning what I thought religion and the spiritual world, I likewise concluded myself to have been a Christian. But since I have seen our friend, Elspat Simson or Buchan, I now conclude, that in all my extensive tour of travels, that I had never seen one whom God would call one of his Christians. All the nominal Christians I had seen were praying to God to forgive their sins, and beseeching God to be reconciled to them, earnestly desiring to know whether or not God loved them; seeking marks and evidences of Christianity. In a word, they are truly concerned about their own everlasting happiness, and indeed those were all the marks applicable to my nominal Christianity. But as soon as I saw the above-mentioned person, I found her thanking God that he had no charge against her, and that she was filled with his own love, in which there is no sin, enmity, or inclination to transgress, and so no room to seek pardon. Instead of beseeching God to be reconciled, she constantly blesses, that God came to her and besought her to be reconciled to him. Yea, she is so filled with the reconciliation of God, that to others she ministers the word of reconciliation; and indeed, to be reconciled to one with the mind of God, is just to be reconciled to God; he and all his children have one mind. Never need one expect to be loosed by God in heaven, till once loosed by a person with his Spirit on earth. Instead of seeking marks to know whether or not God loves her, she is continually pouring forth the indisputable evidences of his overflowing and everflowing love to her; and instead



of fear and concern about her own salvation, she is filled with fears and concerns about the salvation of others. All the thousands of thousands that I have seen, before I saw our spiritual mother, Elspat Simson or Buchan, were concerned about the standing or prolongation of this world; but she is so entirely wearied with everything in this world, that her whole thoughts and heart are intent and bent upon the abolition of this old world, (groaning under the bondage of corruption,) and the hastening of a new heaven and new earth, in which righteousness shall dwell.”\*

Mrs. Buchan was the high priestess of the party. She kept the common stock of the brethren and sisters, for they had all things in common. She managed to get the funds into her hands which they had brought along with them, and they were considerable. She dealt out to them their food, and that in very small portions, that they might be the more spiritualized. She led their hymns, and poured forth her rhapsodies over the Bible, for which she pretended a great respect; while she was the living voice to explain its meaning, and to add to the revelations of the apostles, who, after all, were but worldly-minded men! To maintain her pretensions, she constantly gave out among her devotees, and in the face of the world from the press, that she was the woman mentioned in the xiith chapter of the Book of Revelation, having the sun and the moon under her feet,—the mother of the Lord Jesus Christ, who had been driven into the wilderness,—who had been wandering in the world ever since the days of the Saviour; and who, for sometime past, had been sojourning in Scotland; and that she would never die. It was, indeed, a desperate effort at imposture, if she was of sound mind, (which may be doubted,) and shows how the human race will be deceived with their eyes open, that she should claim to be the “woman with a crown of twelve stars upon her head, and being with child, travailing to be delivered;”† while yet she had left her own husband and her son behind her in Glasgow, and had two of her own daughters of the party, and before their eyes. These things were quite notorious; and yet she had the effrontery to declare that everything was false which was said about her parentage, her age and marriage, adding, in her mystical jargon—“I am unknown, yet well known; for I know whence I came, and whither I am going.”‡

\* Letters, p. 53.

† Rev. xii. 1, 2.

‡ Letters, p. 62.

When the party took up their abode in the offices or out-houses of the farm of New-Cample, now called Buchan-hall, they were confident they would soon be taken up to meet the Lord in the clouds. Nothing prevented it but a want of faith on their part, *in the immediate coming of Christ*, and for this Mrs. Buchan upbraided them very severely. To put away everything like carnal desires, or worldly longings from the midst of them, they entered upon a long fast of forty days, in imitation of Christ's in the wilderness. They fasted and watched, and sung hymns for the second advent. So full was Mr. White of the idea of his being carried aloft, that he for several days dressed himself in his canonicals, put on his gloves, and walked about scanning the heavens, crowds of country people looking on, and expecting every moment that the sound of the archangel's trump would break upon his ears. On one occasion, during the fast, having watched all night for Christ's coming, very early in the morning a flash of flame gleamed in upon the apartment. Mrs. Buchan, at the top of her voice, cried, "He comes, he comes, he comes to reign." Every one was on their feet. Mr. Hunter was but little of stature. He got upon the table, opened his long vest, such as was worn in those days, and flapped it to fly. A knife was in one of its pockets, he cast it out that he might not be burdened. Every moment was an age, till they should mount and soar away. All eyes were strained to the place from whence the light gleamed. It turned out to be the farmer with his lantern in his hand, going out early in the morning to thrash his corn. The spell was broken. Loud wailings filled the apartment. The cunning fanatic rolled the burden upon her dupes, and upbraided them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, which put away from them the coming of Jesus.

The fast, however, had well nigh proved a death-blow to the whole delusion, in a manner which Mrs. Buchan did not expect. Hunger threatened to kill those who gave themselves out as immortal. She who was never to die, required to sip a little cordial out of a bottle, else death would soon have slain her with a lie in her right hand. Some of her emaciated followers could never have crawled out of their beds, if she had not given them a little whisky to keep the machinery of nature moving. The only portion of her followers that gave promise of braving the fast of forty days, were those who, out of love, went out to assist the farmers at their labour, and who, it is likely, managed to gather a few crumbs from the table of the children of Satan. The fast

altogether was a failure. Not a few had their eyes enlightened through their stomach, and quietly went back to Irvine.

These things excited much notice in the countryside. Many scandalous stories were spread to their hurt. Their denial of marriage, as an ordinance of heaven, led to reports of the grossest kind. In this they were wronged. Though they were labouring under a gross delusion, they were striving to lead a life as holy as the angels, and such as they soon expected to live with Christ in paradise. They were temperate, discreet, civil, and peaceful, in a remarkable degree. Besides, they were mostly females. The only child that appeared among them, though the fruit of marriage, was considered to be the fruit of Satan. Not a few of the young women of the party were calm, heavenly, beautiful, and excited much commiseration from visitors. They lived on the best terms with Davidson, the farmer. And at the time when they expected to ascend, and when Mrs. Buchan told them to cast away their trinkets and watches, probably that she might get them, some of them cast any little valuable article which they had into the farmer's house. Curiosity led many to visit them, who treated them rudely, yet they bore it all with patience. Mrs. Buchan was said to be a witch. Popular excitement at last could not be restrained. A mob collected on the 24th Dec., 1784, armed with clubs and rustic weapons, and broke open their house with the view of forcibly expelling them out of the place. The sheriff, however, interfered for their protection, and had forty-two of the rioters tried before him for the assault. The Buchanites would not prosecute. The prosecution had to be laid in the farmer's name, for injury done to his property, and even so peaceful were the Buchanites, that they would scarcely bear witness in reference to the injuries which they had sustained. The first of them called as a witness had to be committed to prison for prevaricating and suppressing the truth.\* Afterwards, they spoke with a little more freedom against their assailants.

This trial pointed out to them the mode of their safety. They saw that if they had a little spot of ground which they could call their own, no mob would have it in their power to touch them, and trespass upon their property. Shortly after the mob, they removed from the parish of Closeburn into Galloway, and possessed a farm called Auchencairn, near the small village called 'the Nine-mile

\* Scots Mag., 1785, p. 148.

Tollbar.' Time, and disappointment, and the return of the ordinary feelings of humanity, cooled their expectations, and frittered down the sect. Some of the young people began to think it was as well to take a husband in the meantime, and among these were Mrs. Buchan's two daughters. Others drew off, and returned to their relations. A few continued to nestle round Mrs. Buchan, who still persevered in her pretensions to be inspired. Some of them wrought on the farm, others of them employed themselves in spinning linen yarn, which was sold in the Dumfries market: in which art they greatly excelled. A few of them wrought as wrights or masons in the neighbourhood. The little colony was esteemed honest, peaceable, and industrious. They dwelt by themselves, and mingled not with the world save when their occupations demanded it. Mrs. Buchan lived till May 1791. In spite of all her vaunting, "that she was a spiritual daughter of God, and that she would never die"—death, which she had all along declared to be the appointment of Satan, also reigned over *her*. She could not quench his arrows. Her ruling passion was strong in death. Immediately before her dissolution she was so *mad* (the word may be taken as denoting both a want of reason and of principle), that she ventured to declare, "that though she might appear to die, they needed not to be discouraged, for she would only sleep a little, and in a short time would visit them again, and conduct them to the New Jerusalem." It was a long time before her votaries would lay out and dress the corpse, nor would they coffin her until obliged by the smell; and even after laid in the dead-chest, they would not bury her, but built up the coffin in a corner of an out-house, always expecting that she would rise again, according to her promise. At last the neighbours, shocked with these proceedings, went to a justice of the peace, and (at the instance of her daughter, who was now married and living in Dumfries) got an order that she should be buried; so that "the famous Mrs. Buchan was at length reduced to a level with all the dead generations of her kind."\*

Considering that Mrs. Buchan was an illiterate woman, and the wife of a potter, without any influence arising from rank, and that she took the dangerous step of deserting her lawful husband, associating with a promiscuous company and regulating their affairs, she met with surprising success. She must have been a

\* Chambers' Lives, p. 387.



person of very quick parts, and, amid all her ravings, of much practical knowledge of human nature. She could strike the passions which lie deep in the human bosom. Like Mahomet, she never ventured upon working miracles, which afford a palpable way of detecting an impostor; but insisted on implicit faith. She gave out her unwavering pretensions to be the woman mentioned in the Book of Revelation, and then cunningly insisted that this fact (forgetting all the while to prove it) was the greatest sign which could be given. "James, John, Andrew, and Peter," said she, "sought no signs to leave their nets, Matthew sought none to leave the receipt of custom. They loved Jesus, and the *call* he gave them, and they needed salvation, which was sign enough to them." So she wrote in 1786; but in a few years "she descended to the grave," and then where was her sign? It served her during her lifetime, but it failed at her death. The sheriff, with his warrant, closed the grave over all her pretensions.

Mr. White was covered with disgrace, when he, to his great mortification, was obliged to produce the body which he would fain have persuaded the world was taken up to heaven. In a short time thereafter he withdrew to America, where he had before been in his younger years. The little handful of followers gradually dispersed, and dropped out of public view. In the year 1839 only two Buchanites were living in Galloway.

It might have been a much more formidable delusion had the Relief presbytery not nipped it in the bud, and saved their churches from being overrun with a pestilent heresy. The scripture rule indeed is excellent—"Every branch that beareth not fruit" is to be taken away.\*

In the year 1785, the sympathies of the Christian public were happily drawn towards a flagrant enormity, and as it lay beyond little sectarian disputes, it was made the instrument, in the hand of God, of uniting different religious denominations in the same philanthropic enterprise, and of drawing away their attention from those internal disputes which were wasting the strength of the church of Christ. Strange as it may appear, the abolition of the slave-trade was the first outlet for the united Christian benevolence of Britain.

\* Authorities.—Minutes of Relief Presbytery, Irvine Session Records, Buchanites' Divine Dictionary, Eight Letters of the Buchanites, Vol. Manuscript Hymns, Statement of a Person who lived at the time at New-Cample, Scots Mag. 1784-5, Christian Journal, years 1835, 1843, Chambers' Lives, Buchan.

The slave-trade having been proposed as the subject of an Essay in the University of Cambridge,—the prize was gained by Thomas Clarkson. Public attention was henceforth drawn strongly to the inhuman traffic, and the horrid cruelties connected with it. Wilberforce, who was, as Robert Hall said of him, “A little bit of incarnate love,” became warmly interested in the case of the West India slaves, and so thoroughly was his mind filled with the murderous nature of the trade of stealing poor Africans, and selling them in the West Indies, that he, in his place in Parliament, in 1787, avowed his design of moving for its abolition. When its evils were partially unveiled by Clarkson, Wilberforce, Grenville Sharp, and others, the burst of popular indignation against it was startling and universal. Pitt and Fox, Burke and the leading men of the day, denounced it in the strongest manner. Britain, it was calculated, had, for fifty years, been robbing Africa annually of sixty thousand of her inhabitants. This was independent of other nations, who were said to be carrying off annually forty thousand more. In all, a hundred thousand were shipped every year from Africa. In procuring these by piratical excursions, and stirring up the towns on the coast by bribes of rum, gunpowder, and muskets, to burn the little country villages under the cloud of night, and seize their inhabitants,—men, women, and children,—as they escaped from the flames, another hundred thousand were destroyed. The half of those shipped died during the passage from Africa to the West Indies, and before they were fully seasoned to a new climate; slave-ships also, from the number crowded on board, from the want of provisions, and water, and from heart-rending grief at being torn from home, were literally floating hospitals of the dying and the dead. Britain, as her share of the wholesale murder, had probably destroyed, since the commencement of the slave-trade, three millions of Africans, and had torn other three millions of unoffending human beings from their native country, of whom the one-half had perished in the middle passage, and the other half had been consigned, along with their offspring, to perpetual bondage. Such was the cruel usage which planters gave their slaves, that few of them lived above nine years after they were introduced into the West Indies. The trade itself was so morally pestilential, that the seamen who were engaged in it, from their vices and diseases, were a blot upon humanity, and threatened to corrupt to its core the navy of great Britain.

It is a doubtful question, if ever any nation on the face of the earth was so stained with crimes as Britain, in consequence of the African slave-trade. Its Christian hands were dripping with blood, and its sugar plantations were manured with the bones and sinews of slaves.

The nation, when it discovered what it was doing, stood aghast, and was filled with lamentation and woe for its sins, and cried out with one consent,—“The trade must be abolished.” The king himself, at his levees, spoke jocosely of his “Black Clients.”

Though the members of the Relief synod studiously avoided all political matters when met as a church court, and kept themselves to things spiritual, yet they felt that the claims of religion and outraged humanity were now upon them, and so early as the spring of 1788, they began to move as a body for the abolition of the slave-trade. The motion of Wilberforce, on the subject, was not yet made. In a truly brotherly spirit it was overtured,—“That a message should be sent to the Associate Burgher and Antiburgher synods at present assembled in this city, (Edinburgh,) begging their concurrence in one and the same meeting with this court, to deliver our sentiments against the inhuman system of the slave-trade, or merchandise of our fellow-creatures, leaving it to those synods to name the time and the place of their meeting.” The overture was adopted, and a committee appointed to make the necessary arrangements.

This overture was highly honourable to the Relief synod; and though much did not come out of it, yet it was a pleasing testimony to the Christian world, of the esteem which they felt at that early period for those two divisions of the church of Christ; and farther, that they were hearty in wishing to take strong and joint measures for putting an end to the accursed traffic in human beings.

Wilberforce continued to press his measure. Evidence was led before the House of Commons, and slavery and the slave-trade were exhibited in the most odious colours. The slave merchants, however, who were at first panic-struck, gradually regained their senses, and the loss of their property staring them in the face, roused them to adopt expedients to thwart or stave off the impending abolition. Mercantile jealousy took the alarm. The commercial men of Bristol, Liverpool, and London, pled their invested property as giving them a right still to carry it

on. Slavery was described as being “redolent with frankincense,” and the fettered dances at the sound of the whip were declared to be “the spontaneous exuberance of jollity and mirth.” Wilberforce was burnt in effigy. The common council of the metropolis, for the sake of mere filthy lucre, voted for the continuance of the trade. Pitt became cool, and from motives of state-expediency wished the question shelved for a season. The friends of abolition were not to be damped. They got the evidence taken before the Commons printed and widely circulated, that it might tell its own tale of impurity, cruelty, and blood. Every minister, established and dissenting, in Scotland, got a copy sent him along with an accompanying letter,\* beseeching him to read it, circulate it, and use his influence to have that “horrid commerce put an end to, which stains the annals of the country, and sinks us to a level with the most barbarous people known in the history of ancient or modern times.” It is related, that when “the abstract of the evidence was presented by a member to one of our highest church courts,—the General Assembly,—some received it with a sneer, asking, as if they had been insulted by the application, ‘What concern have we with it?’”† It was to the honour of the Rev. Neil Douglas, then Relief minister of Cupar, that he, in the spirit of the Relief synod with which he was connected, wrought up the evidence into a large pamphlet of two hundred pages, interspersed with remarks, and had it sold and dispersed throughout the country. It met with a rapid and wide circulation. It was deserving of both. It is crowded with facts on the best authority, and is pointedly and eloquently written.‡ Its effect upon the public mind must have been rousing and salutary; and not the less so, that it came out anonymously, and was not known to be the production of a Relief dissenting minister.

As the pamphlet of Douglas was passing through the press, Wilberforce brought on the question of abolition in parliament. Dundas (afterwards Lord Melville), whose political career was

\* The letter was dated, Edin., 1st December, 1791; and signed WM. FORBES, Chairman.

† African Slave Trade, p. 9. Edin., 1792.

‡ ‘The African Slave Trade, or a Short View of the Evidence relative to that subject produced before the House of Commons, interspersed with such remarks as naturally flowed from it. All meant to evince the sound policy and moral obligation of its immediate and entire abolition.’ Edin., 1792. Anon. [The author, Rev. Neil Douglas.]



distinguished for adroit management, stepped forward with a motion for its *gradual* abolition, which a temporizing House of Common cheerfully adopted. By this means he got "the murderous traffic" continued for other twenty years. This clever, cunning, and unprincipled statesman triumphed among men who wished to be deceived, by representing abolitionists as merely animated "by a false and sickly humanity." The panacea for the slave-trade was to be *moderation* in carrying it on, and its *gradual* abolition in the course of a few years. Fox, in a noble burst of eloquence, tore the mask from the deceptive measure. "They had hit on a means to preserve the traffic for years, perhaps for ever. He rose to deprecate all deceptions and delusions. He knew it was an unpopular thing to renounce moderation; but he did not profess moderation on this subject. In Middleton's Life of Cicero, there was a passage which exactly described what he thought of moderation applied to the Slave Trade—a man might break open a house at midnight, for the purpose of robbery, and might murder the father, mother, children, and domestics—'but,' said the passage, 'all this might be done with moderation.' So, in like manner, by this sort of reasoning, we might proceed in this trade; we might rob, plunder, kidnap, murder, and depopulate a whole country with moderation. He professed no moderation; there could be no qualification of such guilt; he was equally an enemy to all their regulations; regulations as disgraceful as they would be impotent. It was said, Give a bounty on the importation of women. What! Call on the Parliament of Great Britain to give a bounty, and not only authorize, but tempt and provoke men to steal, kidnap, and buy women, for the purpose of dragging them into slavery, for the purpose of a forced procreation? He should like to see the clause by which this inhuman measure was to be presented to the Parliament of England. He should like to see the man with a mind capable of conceiving words to frame such a clause."

But what availed eloquence against the love of wealth? Humanity wept. Religion was deeply wounded. Pious philanthropists in thousands renounced the use of sugar, and the friends of liberty formed associations to advocate the cause of the poor negro, to burst his fetters, and set him free. Faith, and prayer, and untiring perseverance, at last conquered every enemy; and the navy of Britain is now employed in chasing the *slavers* from the

coasts of Africa; and the sable sons of that much-injured land, who were kidnapped in millions, and sold as chattels and goods of merchandise, have, by a vote of the British legislature, in 1833, been declared free. The nation which redeemed them at the price of 20 millions, is now labouring, by schools and missions, to present them as "a chaste virgin unto Christ."

"Fair shines the morning star,  
The silver trumpets sound,  
Their notes re-echoing far  
While dawns the day around.  
Joy to the slave; the slave is free!  
It is the year of Jubilee."

J. MONTGOMERY.

## CHAPTER XIX.

SIGNING OF THE CONFESSION—AYRSHIRE HERESIES—SMITH OF DUNFERMLINE—HIS APOSTASY, AND RECEPTION INTO THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND.

IN no state of society is there unmixed good or evil. The sun has its spots. The more highly burnished the steel, the greater the danger of its being fretted with particles of rust. In the latter half of the seventeenth century religious liberty made considerable progress; but it soon began to throw off becoming restraints. The enlightened discussion also of the truths of religion, through perversion, threatened to sap the foundations of the great principles of Christianity. Subscribing Confessions of Faith, both in Scotland and England, began to be attacked about 1770, as being injurious to honesty and liberty of conscience; and a secret liking to Socinian errors, though disallowed, lay at the bottom of the movement.

The Rev. Mr. Ferguson, of the parish of Kilwinning, in 1767, was the first person that wished to set aside subscription to the Confession of Faith as a term of admission to the Church of Scotland. This was scarcely the quarter whence it might have been expected. He had published, six years before, a pamphlet against the Secession, in which he repudiated their cry against the church, that she was “corrupt in doctrine, discipline, worship, and government, as being false and calumnious;” insisting particularly on the “*soundness of the Confession of Faith*,” which all her licentiates, by acts of Parliament and Assembly, were obliged to sign; and further, “that none were allowed to vent doctrines contrary thereunto without being censured when proven guilty.”\* Even when flourishing this bravado, in the face of the Seceders, the leaven of Socinianism

\* A Display of the Act and Testimony, &c., p. 18. 1761.

had, in all probability, begun to work in his mind, and the Westminster Confession, with its strong Calvinism, was felt by him to be gall and wormwood. With more zeal than prudence, he, a few years thereafter, pressed, as a correspondent, a communication, under the signature of A. B., into the pages of the Scots Magazine,\* in which he maintained, “that no human government has a right to impose subscription in matters of faith and morals to a composition of fallible men, but only *in so far as it was agreeable to the scriptures*,—that to sign it in any other way was destructive of the natural right of private judgment,—that there was no dishonesty in subscribing the Confession, and not believing and adhering to every proposition of it as truth.” This was startling doctrine to hear from one who, a few years before, had cast back the reproaches of the Secession about heterodoxy as the grossest slanders, because the ministers of the Establishment were bound to sign and adhere to the Confession of Faith. Besides, his letter gave clear indications that he was personally of Socinian views as to the death of Christ, and that Dr. Taylor of Norwich was his oracle in religious tenets. A host of controversialists speedily appeared, of whom the Rev. Mr. Baine of Edinburgh was one of the first. He denounced the letter. Others pressed forward. Public attention was roused. The *fama* became so loud and universal, that the synod of Glasgow and Ayr felt themselves compelled to do something in the business. As the letter in the Magazine was anonymous, and as Mr. Ferguson was in an infirm state of health, and most of his brethren in the west were privy to its publication, and even held the same sentiments, the church courts were about to allow the affair to slip through their fingers. No member of court would name Mr. Ferguson as the author, and come forward and libel him; whereupon the Rev. Mr. Lang happening to say, during the course of the debate,—“Any bystander might do it,”† James M’Connell, drummer of Beith, took advantage of the hint, and “next morning gave in the author’s name, with a libel, offering witnesses to prove it at the bar of the synod.” The orthodox party were blamed for pressing

\* Scots Mag., p. 173. 1767.

† ‘Some Reasons humbly offered to the Public, why a Prosecution was commenced and carried on against Mr. Alexander Ferguson, Minister in Kilwinning, and author of the Letter, and Appendix in the Scots Magazine, April 1767. By James M’Connell, drummer in Beith. To which is subjoined, some Remarks on several Occurrences during the Prosecution, and since the Synod took it into their own Hand.’ Glasgow. 1769.



him forward into the obnoxious office—"of heresy prosecutor." He, at all events, was not unwilling to fight the battles of the church militant, as he, an old soldier, had formerly fought the battles of his country. The position of the synod was queer in the extreme. The "drummer of Beith," prosecuting one of its members as a heretic, and thrusting himself forward into the breach, which none of their reverences had the courage to mount! As might have been expected, many obstacles were thrown in his way, and many, so called, "unavoidable delays" intervened; but the "drummer" was just the more "confirmed in his resolution to prosecute" the matter till its final issue.

According to the "Form of Process," he went and dealt with the conscience of Mr. Ferguson, prepared his libel, and laid it in due form upon the table of the Irvine Presbytery, as this was the court where the cause required to be conducted. Little or no progress was made in it. He carried it by a protest, on the ground of "delays," to the synod. Public opinion was now become strong on behalf of the prosecution. M'Connell, however, was not the person to manage a process of heresy. There was something of the mock heroic about the prosecution so long as it was in his hands. The synod, therefore, stripped him of his office, took the matter into its own hand, and appointed a committee to libel, and prosecute the matter to a termination. The cause was now become deeply serious, and the deposition of Ferguson was likely to be the result. He was an old man, and upon the whole, much respected by his co-presbyters. "Vigorous measures were therefore resorted to for the purpose of strangling the prosecution. An appeal by the Presbytery of Irvine was taken to the General Assembly; and, on the ground of this appeal, they forbade all their members to give evidence in the case, till a point of form in the process was decided by the supreme court." This interdict served their purpose. The committee of synod met in Glasgow, summoned the ministers of the Irvine Presbytery, who treated their summons as so much waste paper.

The next meeting of synod took place before the Assembly in 1768; and then a compromise was entered into between the moderate and evangelical sections of the church. All agreed that the mode of subscription advocated by Mr. Ferguson was unconstitutional and untenable. In a certain sense it was quite correct, that no man should subscribe the Confession but as it agreed with the scriptures; but, if he only subscribed it *in so far*

as it agreed with them, not condescending on the points in which it differed, reserving these, according to Mr. Ferguson, in his own mind; "then, in the same way he might sign the Canons of the Council of Trent, or the Creed of Pope Pius, or the Koran itself, as, in each of these there are things agreeable to the scriptures." The question put to him at his ordination had been, "Do you sincerely own and believe the whole doctrine contained in the Confession of Faith to be founded on the word of God? And do you acknowledge the same to be the confession of your faith?" The synod, by an overture, expressed their detestation of everything contrary to the established doctrine of the church, which they had all engaged to support, and of everything like falsehood and disingenuity in subscribing the standards of the church, while they also disapproved of the publication of the letter which had been the foundation of the process. Mr. Ferguson confessed it never was his intention in anything he had published to deny the Scripture doctrine of the satisfaction of Christ, or to encourage disingenuity in subscription; and the whole affair was dismissed. The festering sore was merely skinned over, and it soon after burst forth in a far more aggravated form. Peace was sought before purity, and the prurient matter speedily broke out in another part of the corporate body.\*

In the year 1786 the Rev. Dr. William M'Gill, one of the

\* This process led to the publication of two very able volumes of Church controversy. The first was written, 1771, under the signature of *Christianus*, and was read by Mr. Ferguson on his death-bed, and recommended by him to be published. The copy which lies before me, is a presentation copy from the author to Mr. Wodrow, Stevenston. The handwriting is aged and infirm. It is entitled 'The Religious Establishment in Scotland examined upon Protestant principles: a Tract, occasioned by the late Prosecution against the late Reverend Mr. Alexander Fergusson, Minister in Kilwinning.' London: MDCLXXI. Its tenor is Socinian. Its object is to show that the Church of Scotland has gradually become narrower in her basis, intolerant in her doctrinal sentiments, and stringent in her formula of subscription to the Confession, and that she is now requiring a greater uniformity of opinion from her ministers than what the law which established her requires. Rather than be bound by such trammels, *Christianus* would renounce a legal establishment altogether—to which indeed he has no great love.

In answer to this volume there was published, in 1774, 'A Vindication of the Discipline and Constitutions of the Church of Scotland for preserving Purity of Doctrine.' Its author was the Rev. Mr. Walker, Dundonald, the great friend of Gillespie and of the originators of the Relief church, and he often twits the moderates with the fact, that while they were crying out for freedom in doctrinal speculations on the essentials of religion, they would allow no freedom of conscience in obeying the mere ecclesiastical injunctions of men.

ministers of Ayr, published 'A Practical Essay on the Death of Christ, in Two Parts: Containing, first, the History, and, secondly, the Doctrine of his Death.' This Essay, which is written in a chaste, elegant style, and which contains a number of pious reflections on the death of Christ, was nevertheless a very insidious attempt to explain away the atonement of Jesus, and to introduce Socinian views as to the dignity of his person, the nature of his priesthood, and the way of salvation by his cross. It was full of deadly poison, and yet so nicely served up under a profusion of scripture expressions about the sufferings of Jesus, that a plain reader would drink it in without discovering that it was aught but "the sincere milk of the word." The more discerning part of the Christian public soon detected the mixture, and the Essay became the topic of general conversation, and of loud denunciations, from both the pulpit and press. Those who knew the state of matters in Ayr were not astonished at it. The Shorter Catechism, under the direction of the ministers of the borough, had been superseded in the schools by the Catechism of Taylor of Norwich, and two lifeless productions by Dr. Dalrymple. Socinian doctrine was all but openly taught from the pulpits. The respectability of the clergymen—Messrs. M'Gill and Dalrymple—made their errors doubly dangerous, as they were highly esteemed by the more intellectual and tasteful part of the population. Dr. M'Gill was amiable and charitable in no ordinary degree. The public mind was in a great measure dead to religious influence; the humbling and heart-stirring doctrines of the cross were heard from comparatively few pulpits in the Establishment. The fashion for the time—for there is even a fashion in religion—was adverse to the doctrines of the Confession. After the first feeling of horror among the dissenters and the evangelical portion of the Establishment had passed away, it is probable the Essay would have sunk into oblivion, to give place to something still more rankly Socinian, had not a casual circumstance, and a mere personal skirmish, brought it into fresh notice, and shamed the church courts to do something in the matter.

The 5th of November, 1788, was observed by order of the Assembly, as a centenary commemoration of the Revolution settlement. Dr. Peebles, minister of Newton-Ayr, printed the sermon which he had preached on the occasion. "In it he mentioned Dr. M'Gill's Essay, and disapproved of his doctrine, as being contrary to the Confession of Faith which he had sub-

scribed. His remarks were highly displeasing to Dr. M'Gill, who soon after published a sermon, which he also had preached on the same occasion, with an appendix containing severe strictures on Mr. Peebles' sermon."\* Having been reproached with not believing the Confession which he had subscribed, he, in self-defence, took the high ground, that it was the result "of ignorance and pride to express the articles of our faith in fitter words than the Holy Spirit has done,—that subscription to articles of faith of human composition was altogether wrong, being an encroachment on Christian liberty equally unnecessary and ineffectual,—and that Dr. Peebles either subscribed the Confession in so far as it was agreeable to the word of God, or he followed it farther;" in which latter case, he acted on principles neither Christian nor Protestant. These were just the old points which had been discussed and settled in the case of Ferguson of Irvine. The former prosecution was still fresh in the memory of all in the district. "The drummer of Beith" had not yet, nor for a long time after, ceased to be the hero, in proverbial gossip, for hunting down heretics. The conduct of Dr. M'Gill was, therefore, considered as akin to that of the Irvine heretic, and not a few of the friends of Dr. Peebles were ready to volunteer their services, like M'Connell, to libel him, and to prove that he was a foe to the constitution of the Church of Scotland, as well as a gross heretic, and that the appendix to his sermon was the key to his Essay. The laity were in flames, and were ready to step forward if the church judicatories did not of themselves take some step against him.

Accordingly, when the synod of Glasgow and Ayr met at Glasgow in April 1789, three years after the Essay was published, an overture was brought before them, that they might not be concussed by bystanders, "to take into their serious consideration the doctrines taught in the books of Dr. M'Gill, which were reported to be contrary to the word of God, the Confession of Faith, and his ordination vows."

In spite of numerous efforts made to stifle the inquiry, Dr. M'Gill was at last compelled to come down from the eminence on which he sat, and from whence he had threatened, like the Old Testament prophet, to hurl destruction on all who should dare to approach him, and humbly make a confession to the public,

\* 'The Procedure of our Church Courts in the Case of the Rev. Dr. M'Gill of Ayr,' &c., p. 28.



which he attempted to couch in ambiguous language to save his conscience and respectability, but which he knew was to be understood as importing far more than its literal phraseology might be technically explained to imply.

A committee, chosen equally from the moderate and evangelical side of the house, retired with him, and soon thereafter returned with a paper of apologetic explanations, which was read, and unanimously accepted of by the court, to the grief and heart-burning of the religious public. The following paragraph contains its substance:—"I hereby declare, that I am sorry that my publications should have given offence to any of my brethren, or to the world. And now, upon further reflection, I am sensible that there are ideas contained in these publications which may appear improper, and modes of expression ambiguous and unguarded, particularly respecting the original and essential dignity of the Son of God; the doctrine of atonement by his sufferings and death; the priesthood and intercession of Christ; the method of reconciling sinners to God; and subscription to the Confession of Faith; all which ideas I hereby disclaim, and for all such expressions I am heartily sorry, and hereby declare my belief of these great articles, as they are laid down in the standards of this church. I therefore entreat the reverend synod to receive this my apology, which I leave with them, and submit it to their determination to publish these my explanations and apology to the world, if they shall think it necessary.

WILLIAM M'GILL."\*

Although Dr. M'Gill's apology was satisfactory to the synod of Glasgow and Ayr, it was viewed in a very different light by the people in the west of Scotland. Whatever the clergy might think of it, the laity were not satisfied, that he should merely acknowledge that he was now sensible, that there were ideas in his publications which "*may appear improper, and modes of expression ambiguous, and unguarded,*" and that he should be subjected to no ecclesiastical censure, not even to a rebuke from the chair. It was a considerable time after the apology was sustained, before the lay members of the church recovered from the surprise they had been thrown into, by the very unexpected termination of the business. "But after consulting among themselves in different

\* Procedure, p. 41.

corners of Scotland, they determined to libel Dr. M'Gill, and bring him to condign punishment, by stripping him of his ministry." \*

Four persons, accordingly, gave in to the Presbytery of Ayr, a complaint and libel against Dr. M'Gill. They were of the humbler ranks in life. One of them belonged to the parish of Craigie, another to Kilmarnock, a third to Paisley, and a fourth to Anderston. To defray the expense of the prosecution, subscriptions were raised over the country as far north as Aberdeen. The advocate employed by them was the famous Thomas Muir, who was afterwards prosecuted as "a political reformer." Many things, however, were against them. They were mere men of straw; not one of them belonged to the parish of Dr. M'Gill. There was nothing about them of the heroism of the drummer of Beith, whose laurels they were anxious to wear, for they were only hirelings. In every court, and at every stage of the business, they were met with insulting accusations, because they were poor and illiterate—had no interest in the matter, and had sold themselves to others for money. That they were plain men is certain, but that they were unprincipled or mercenary there is no reason to believe; yet it was not easy for them, in the circumstances, to rebut the charges, and their cause, in public estimation, suffered accordingly. Other men should have borne the brunt of the contest. After much fruitless labour and expense, the cause at last came before the Assembly in 1791, when it was dismissed as a matter already judged of by the ecclesiastical courts, and that it could not be revived under a mere different form of procedure. The libellers, or rather the persons that wished the honour of libelling, met with very supercilious treatment, and speaker after speaker reprobated the very idea of farmers, and shoemakers, and linen printers, aided by the money of others, appearing as the prosecutors of a minister of whom they were not hearers, and that they would be better employed attending to their ploughs, their lasts, their webs, and printing-blocks, than framing syllogisms to catch a heretic.

These were no doubt telling topics for declamation; but the committee of prosecution, after the cause was cast out, could say, with great power, to the public, "That Dr. M'Gill's prosecution, which was one of the most important causes

\* Procedure, p. 51.

that ever came before our church judicatories, should have terminated in the manner it did, is not at all surprising, when we consider of whom our General Assemblies are composed; namely, clergymen, the bulk of whom have not come into the church by the door, but climbed up some other way, and have never repented of their intrusion into the ministry: And a number of elders, as they are termed, who have no right to sit in that court, seeing they were not chosen by the people to that office, do not reside within the bounds of the Presbyteries which they represent, have not the qualifications of elders, nor are employed in their duties; but get themselves smuggled into the eldership, to serve their own bye-ends, to have liberty to speak in the Assembly, to show their parts, and consequently recommend themselves as proper persons for transacting business in a civil line.”\*

There was less of originality in the Ayrshire heresies, than what many gave their authors credit for. The very same opposition to subscribing Confessions of Faith, had been made in England in 1772, and for the same reason—a secret love of Socinianism. In a petition presented to parliament that year, by several hundred of the Established clergy and others, they said, “We apprehend that we have certain rights and privileges which we hold of God alone, one of which is the exercise of our own reason and judgment. We are also warranted by those original principles of the Reformation from Popery, on which the Church of England is founded, to judge in searching the scriptures, each man for himself, what may or may not be proved thereby. From the enjoyment of this valuable privilege, we find ourselves in a great measure precluded by the laws, relative to subscriptions, requiring us to acknowledge certain articles and Confessions of Faith, and doctrine, drawn up by fallible men, to be all, and every one of them agreeable to the sacred scriptures. We request to be freed from these impositions, and to be restored to our undoubted right as Protestants, of interpreting the scriptures for ourselves, without being bound by any human explanations,—a submission to which is an encroachment on our rights, both as men, and as members of a Protestant Establishment.”

The petitioners were very properly told, that they might choose their religious creed, but that an Establishment must

\* Procedure, p. 156.

have certain regulations and laws for its government and direction, and that if they had changed their sentiments, it was always in their power to alter their profession, and bid adieu to the Established priesthood. The emoluments of every corporate body are connected with holding the principles on which it is founded; and if these are given up, common honesty requires that a resignation should instantly follow.

It is amazing that Dr. M'Gill did not see the truth of this, and give up his charge when he abandoned the principles of the Confession of Faith. It was worthless to hold one doctrine while he was paid for preaching another. To whine about the loss of liberty in such a case, was the purest twaddle. No one prevented him from framing and professing his opinions according to his ideas of scripture, only he must not preach doctrine that was heterodox, and be paid as if it were orthodox.

The Ayrshire heresies travelled quickly over Scotland; and while the far greater proportion of ministers and people condemned them, some few were infected with their plausible appeals to liberty, and to the discoveries of enlightened reason, apart from creeds and theological systems. The synod of Relief did not altogether escape. The Rev. James Smith, Dunfermline, author of 'The Historical Sketches of Relief Ministers,' published 'An Essay on Confessing the Truth,' and 'A Discourse on the Necessity, Nature, and Design, of Christ's sufferings,' with the avowed "design of refuting some dangerous mistakes in Dr. M'Gill's publications on the same subject;" but instead of refuting them, he chimed in, to a certain extent, with his views, and found out some common ground on which he thought all might meet. He was not for setting aside altogether "systems and creeds;" but he thought they had been too much revered, and that it was "of great importance to purge popular systems, as much as possible, from every thing absurd and unscriptural." With this view he proposed to discuss from the press—"Man's original state, the fall, the covenants, human nature before conversion, good works, the gospel, and other important theological subjects, and invited the assistance and correspondence of experienced divines, so that all old mistakes might be corrected, and new discoveries in religion be received and diffused over the church." As an example of his plan of free discussion, he published his 'Discourse on the Sufferings of Christ,' and explained and vindicated, as he thought, in a satisfactory way, the doctrine of the atonement. The penalty connected



with the moral law he considered arbitrary on the part of God. "It is wisdom and goodness, rather than justice," said he, "which regulates the nature and extent of the penalty."\* "This arbitrary penalty being incurred, God appointed his Son to bear it without mitigation; but in his sufferings there was no satisfaction made to the essential or vindictive justice of God against sin, for there was no such attribute in God. The sufferings of Christ were merely intended to prevent the law from losing its force, and, by an example of suffering, to establish the authority of the Law-giver, and to enforce obedience to its precepts." This was coming far short of the orthodox view of the atonement; and although mingled up with much truth, and published against Socinian errors, it was by his brethren considered as an emanation of the same school, and a departure from sound words.

In little more than a year after his little *Irenicum* saw the light, the forming Relief congregation of Dundee called him to be its minister. The call was sustained and concurred in by the presbytery of Dysart, within whose bounds Dundee then was, before any formal complaint was made against the heretical opinions of Mr. Smith. A complaint, however, was made before the call was accepted of by him, as he belonged to another presbytery. The cause came before the synod in 1790, and they felt themselves placed in very difficult circumstances. The congregation of Dundee insisted on his settlement among them. Several of the presbytery of Dysart, Messrs. Nicholson, King, and Paterson, insisted that the scandal of heresy should first be purged. A committee of synod was appointed on the spot to examine his writings, already noticed, and another discourse of his 'On the Carnal Man's Character.' The work was perfunctorily done. The synod was not the radical court for raising the prosecution. At length a kind of half measure was resorted to,—Go on with the ordination in the mean time according to the laws of the church, and reserve the right of parties to prosecute for heresy. Several members dissented, and threatened to libel him, which, no doubt, was the proper course. Next year the cause came up again, and the parties were still more exasperated against each other than before. A larger committee was appointed out of the four presbyteries,—Edinburgh, Glasgow, St. Ninians, and Dysart,—to examine the writings of Mr. Smith, which was to meet at Falkirk,

and report, in a formal manner, to the next meeting of synod. The matter was now become too serious to be settled without a thorough investigation. At this meeting of synod the court rashly originated and organized the Perth presbytery, by disjoining the churches in that quarter from the Dysart presbytery. They thus removed Smith from the bounds of those ministers who would have watched his motions, and who were dealing with him for his heresies.

The synod, at their meeting in 1792, were told that their process of heresy against Mr. Smith had come to an end, as he had gone over to the Church of Scotland along with part of his congregation, and that he had at once been received, notwithstanding of the charges of pravity of doctrine that were pending against him. His desertion of the synod was a glaring attempt to escape the infliction of discipline. The Church of Scotland far too readily threw her protecting arm over him, and shielded him from censure. The synod, however, was resolved to vindicate, as far as possible, the truth of God, and inflict deserved censure upon error. Since they could not reach the transgressor by discipline, they could at least make him suffer at the bar of public opinion; and therefore they condemned certain propositions in his books, savouring of Socinianism and Arminianism, and inserted their condemnation in the Edinburgh and Glasgow newspapers.

It may be thought there was something vindictive in this procedure. It came far short, however, of his deserts. Besides being a heretic, he had quietly lent £400 to the Dundee congregation when they were building their place of worship. He thereby secured a call to the church, and when about to be condemned as a heretic, he summoned the congregation together, and on the spot demanded his money, or offered to buy the church by paying to them a like sum. They had not the money. He had an advocate from Edinburgh to bully the people, and by concussing them, he carried his point, became sole proprietor of the meeting-house, and ignobly transferred it to the Establishment as a chapel-of-ease. He was wise "in his generation," for heretics cannot live as dissenting ministers.

A few months before Mr. Smith bolted from the synod, the Rev. Dr. Simpson of Pittenweem had returned from England, having been minister, since the time he had left Dunse, successively in London and Alnwick, and was again received into con-

nection with the Relief body. He immediately began to prepare a small work, "with the view of preventing, as far as he could, the baleful influence of Mr. Smith's pernicious errors, and rousing the synod to a more careful perusal of his writings, that they might perceive how contrary his opinions were to the word of God." Having heard of his attempt to betray the sacred trust committed to him by the presbytery at the very time when he was busily engaged preparing his pamphlet, he was stimulated to finish it quickly, as the reason "why it should see the light was now stronger than ever." It was published under the title—'The Dangerous Errors contained in Mr. Smith's Publications on the Nature, Necessity, and Design of the Sufferings of Christ, Stated and Refuted.' It met with a very wide circulation, and though it had no effect in disturbing Mr. Smith in his chapel-of-ease at Dundee, it made the religious public aware of the game that had been played in robbing the synod of a church, and served to confirm the different churches amid those shaking times in the faith of the gospel.

There were two Relief ministers who rendered at this period signal service to the cause of truth, and contributed, in no small degree, to stem the gathering tide of Socinian heresy, and bring back the Church of Scotland to the doctrine contained in her standards. Before the church courts in the Establishment had made any movement about the 'Essay' of Dr. M'Gill, the Rev. Patrick Hutchison, now translated to Paisley, preached and published by request 'Three Discourses on the Divine and Mediatorial Character of Jesus Christ.' They are truly masterly discourses, characterized by that breadth of intellect, and that fervour of mind, which so remarkably distinguished their author. He sounded the tocsin of alarm, and called upon the church courts to be faithful to the Son of God in executing the appointed discipline of his house. "Some attempts lately made," says he, "to establish this scheme of principles (Socinian), are only, we fear, the beginning of sorrows to this poor nation, and intended to try the pulse of the people, whether they are either so ignorant of religion, or so indifferent about its interests, as to endure with quietness to see its foundations razed. And should such a temper be found to prevail, there is little reason to doubt that more open attempts will be made to disseminate these pernicious principles; so that though they have hitherto been in a great measure a pestilence walking in darkness, they will at last become a destruction wasting at noon. Whether church-judicatures, to

which these things properly belong, will take cognizance of them, we know not; but the authority of the Word, the sacred honour of Jesus Christ, the bleeding interest of truth, the edification of Christians, and their own character, loudly call upon them to apply the appointed discipline of the sanctuary in a very pointed and decisive manner. In such a case as this the neglect of due censure is highly culpable, and opens a door for heresies of all kinds to appear with impunity, to the visible danger of the interest of religion, both in the present and coming generations. Whatever the church courts may think of these things, or do concerning them, they are most serious, weighty, and important in their own nature, and will be found to be so at a judgment-seat. May the Spirit of God dispose them to be faithful to the Son of God now, in executing the appointed discipline of his house, that so their neglect of judgment may not be judged and condemned by him in the awful day of his righteous and unalterable decisions!"\*

Such an appeal coming from such a man as Mr. Hutchison, whose name was a tower of strength in the west of Scotland, could not but rouse both ministers and elders to something like a sense of their duty.

When the controversy about the Ayrshire heresies waxed fierce, and a vast number of controversial pamphlets were thrown upon the public mind, and the doctrines of the divinity and atonement of Jesus were beleagured by many unfriendly hands, and, alas! were not receiving that support which they should have obtained from the Established church courts of Scotland, the Rev. Dr. John Erskine of Edinburgh called in the aid of some of the foreign divines to support these doctrines, and to show his countrymen that they were the doctrines of the churches of the Reformation. Not being a Dutch scholar himself, he sent a Treatise, written "by Peter Allinga of the Dutch Netherlands, On the Satisfaction of Christ," to the Rev. Thomas Bell, Glasgow, who translated it, and published it, "as he found that, in a narrow compass with solid learning, he effectually cut the sinews of Socinianism."†

\* Divine and Mediatorial Character of Christ, by P. Hutchison, p. 70.

† 'The Satisfaction of Christ Stated and Defended against the Socinians: in two parts. By Peter Allinga, Pastor of the Church of Christ in Wydenesse, in the Dutch Netherlands. Faithfully translated from the Dutch by Thomas Bell, Minister of the Gospel in Glasgow.' Glasgow: 1790.



This was followed by another, which Dr. Erskine also sent him, recommending him to peruse it attentively, and translate it. He did so. It was entitled, ‘A Proof of the True and Eternal Godhead of our Lord Jesus Christ, against Modern Attacks. By Dionysius Van De Wynpersse, D.D., professor of philosophy, mathematics, and astronomy, at Leyden: which gained the highest prize of the Hague Society, for the defence of Christianity, 1792. Translated from the Dutch by Thomas Bell, Minister, Glasgow.’ Edin.: 1795.

To these two excellent treatises, which are now in a great measure fallen out of notice, Mr. Bell added one of his own, written with that point for which he was so remarkable. Its very title bespeaks the author—‘The Articles of Ayr contrasted with the Oracles of Truth.’ He was deeply grieved at the conduct of the church courts in receiving the explanation and apology of Dr. M’Gill, and approving of it as satisfactory. “A mournful decision indeed. And yet the synod, deeply impressed with a sense of the happy conclusion to which the matter was brought, appointed a reverend member to return thanks to God for his countenance and direction in that business, which was done accordingly. So Saul spared Agag, and spake of sacrificing unto the Lord.” \*

The Relief synod became alarmed at the loose way of subscribing the Confession which Dr. M’Gill had advocated, and which Mr. Smith had given practical evidence that he was disposed to adopt. Mr. Bell, in his preface to ‘Van De Wynpersse,’ had drawn attention to the subject. To prevent, if possible, every heretic from getting access into the denomination under the guise of subscribing the Confession of Faith, *so far as it agrees with the Scriptures*, while yet he rejected much of it as not agreeing with them, the synod, after exposing Mr. Smith in the newspapers of the day, and washing their hands of his heresies, brought in an overture at that very meeting—“That the minister who presides in the work of ordination, or admission of any minister not formerly ordained by any of the presbyteries subject to the synod, shall, in the questions to be put to the person to be ordained, or thus admitted, keep precisely by the act of Assembly relative to that affair, and, in particular, shall not ask, ‘Do you agree to the Confession of Faith, *in so far as agreeable to the word of*

\* Bell’s Allinga, Preface, p. vii.

*God*, but put the question in the identical words enjoined by the Assembly;’ which was unanimously adopted.” The meaning of the injunction was, that every person to be ordained should receive the Westminster Confession, *as the confession of his faith*. They wished it to be made a test of orthodoxy; and, as the article in the formula of the Assembly was very stringently expressed, it was for the time adopted to serve a particular purpose.

The effect of the Ayrshire heresies would probably have convulsed the Church of Scotland, as well as some of the dissenting bodies who rushed eagerly into the controversy, had not a larger wave come behind. The French revolution soon swallowed up every other topic of discussion, and states and churches stood aghast at the greatness and rapidity of those changes which swept like a tornado over the face of European society.

## CHAPTER XX.

### DEATH OF MR. BAINE—HIS CHARACTER—INTRODUCTION OF THE HYMNS.

AFTER a long ministry of sixty years, the Rev. Mr. Baine died at Edinburgh, on the 17th January, 1790, in the eightieth year of his age. Though pretty far advanced in life when he gave up his connection with the Establishment and joined the Relief, yet he was twenty-four years minister of the Relief congregation, College-street. In many respects he was the most remarkable person of all the early fathers of the Relief church. Being located in Edinburgh, his influence was felt issuing from the metropolis of Scotland over every part of the country. His character was established, his fame was known, and his talents were matured for managing ecclesiastical matters before he joined the forming Relief party, and these things went along with him into his new connection. His judgment was clear, his acquirements as a scholar and theologian were of the very first order. Few men of his day wrote the English language with so much neatness and purity. His printed sermons and pamphlets are models of clear, chaste, and graceful writing. Acting for many years as clerk of the first Relief Presbytery before the body was so numerous as to be constituted into a synod, he had the moulding of the whole religious denomination in his hands; and unquestionably it was mainly to his liberal and enlightened views of the constitution of the church of Christ, and his firmness in maintaining them, that the Relief church, in the face of great opposition from every quarter, retained that catholic constitution on which it had been founded by Gillespie and Boston.

“During the more vigorous period of an active life, one distinguishing feature in the character of Mr. Baine was, his bold and determined resolution in condemning and exposing, on proper occasions, whatever he considered to be a violation of public

morality. While in Paisley, he published a sermon preached before the Society for Reformation of Manners in that town, (instituted under his auspices,) in which he testified, in strong terms, against the prevailing vices of the age; and, when prosecuting his labours in the metropolis in 1770, the amusements of the stage called forth a similar manifestation of his zeal. This discourse—the first edition of which was sold off in the course of a few days—was occasioned by the performance of the comedy of the *Minor*, written by Foote, in which the characters of Whitefield, and other zealous ministers, were held up to profane and blasphemous ridicule. The sermon was entitled ‘The Theatre Licentious and Perverted,’ and had prefixed to it the following curious and rather singular dedication:—

‘ TO SAMUEL FOOTE, ESQ.

‘ Uncommon, or rather *outré*, productions (witness your *Minor*) suit the times. This dedication pretends to be of that quality, and entirely out of the beaten track. Instead of adulation and fulsome flattery, it is the reverse and plain. Christianity is certainly worth something; and you may be assured, Sir, that in North Britain it has its admirers still. It has the countenance of law. To insult it, therefore, was neither pious nor prudent. An Aristophanes, worthless as he and his comedy were, compassed the death of a great man. It was fond and foolish, if you aimed at the same success against our holy religion, or what is most venerable in it; and wicked as foolish. When I recollect the whole of the horrid scene, Mr. Foote and his spruce band of actors performing their part, it has once and again brought to my mind the day when the Saviour of our world was enclosed in an assembly of the great and gay, dressed in a gorgeous robe, an ensign of mock-royalty, to be laughed at. In some such manner have you treated what is most interesting in revelation, and dear to believers of it. Culpable complaisance would not have told you the one-half of this. Genuine charity, perhaps, would have said much more than I have done. Wishing, with all my heart that you may speedily become as conspicuous a penitent, as you have done despite to the Spirit of Grace, I am, Sir, your faithful servant.’

“ Mr. Foote considered it necessary to reply to this attack; and, accordingly, in 1771, appeared an ‘Apology for the *Minor*, in a letter, to the Rev. Mr. Baine.’ In this defence the dramat-



ist rests his argument solely upon one point—that he merely satirized the follies and the vices of those who were only pretend-ers to the character of the religious. The general opinion was, that this comedy could never have been so keenly relished, but for the too ready disposition of a large class of mankind to take hold of everything connected with the imperfections of the professors of religion.” \*

Those who are the detractors of the Relief cause, have endeavoured to give currency to the report, that Mr. Baine, at the close of life, regretted the step he had taken, and had the evening of his days embittered by “the decline of his popularity,” and “a sense of his peculiar situation in regard to the Established church.” Every man’s popularity as a preacher declines, when he draws near to the verge of fourscore years. He had no doubt, like other ministers, his trials, partly arising from an infirm constitution, which frequently incapacitated him for public duty, partly from domestic circumstances, and particularly from a long legal, expensive, and vexatious process, about the guardianship of a near relation, whom it would have been his duty to endeavour to protect, although he had continued in connection with the Church of Scotland.

Whatever misunderstandings may have sprung up between him and certain parties in his church, whose first love may have cooled, and who were bound for his stipend, his congregation continued numerous and highly respectable till the last. So much was he esteemed by his brethren, that they volunteered, in his old age, from all parts of the country, to aid him in carrying on his ministerial labours. They went in succession to preach

\* Kay’s Portraits, p. 86.—In the Appendix to Cook’s Life of Principal Hill, there is an extract from one of his letters, written when a young man, which throws considerable light on this matter. “The letter is dated at Edinburgh, November, 1775.—We had a great riot at the theatre last Saturday. The Minor was acted, it is said, by the President’s desire; others say, that he only desired a good play, and that Foote (who was then the manager of the Edinburgh Theatre) chose that himself. An old bawd is introduced, who is a Methodist, which gives him an opportunity of ridiculing Methodism. To the play was joined an epilogue, which he used to speak in the character of Whitefield, squinting as he did. The President had desired that this epilogue should not be spoken, and Foote said, he did not intend to speak it; I suppose both on account of the number of admirers which Whitefield has here, and his being lately dead.” The audience, however, demanded the epilogue as a spicy dessert to the entertainment, and Foote reluctantly complied and spoke it.

for him at Edinburgh. Regular assistants were not at that time easily procured.

Surely those who hazard the assertion, that he gave up his principles, after being some time a Relief minister, never looked into the volume of sermons which he published in 1778, and in which he gives most lucid views of the scriptural constitution of the church of Christ,—the entire separation of the church from the state,—and defends Relief principles as to free communion against those who had assailed them. As it is gratifying to know what were the opinions of Baine, after he had twelve years' experience of a dissenting minister's life, and was approaching the mature age of seventy, the following excerpts are not without their interest.

In pointing out the distinct limits between the church of Christ and the kingdoms of this world, he says, "The power and exercise of discipline in the church of Christ is not committed to the civil magistrate; and for this obvious reason, that, at the commencement of Christianity, the then ruling powers were the bitter enemies of the Christian faith, and its blessed Author. Magistracy, no doubt, is the ordinance of God; and the person clothed with that office is his minister for good: but his jurisdiction and province are wholly distinct from those of the Christian pastor. Agreeably to which, our Saviour tells us that his kingdom is not of this world. The object of civil government is the secular interest alone, the preservation of the original rights of mankind, which makes society prosperous and peaceful. Its power is coercive; it compels to obedience; or rather, punishes the disobedient with fines, prison, banishment, and death. To these powers, which are of God, all, of whatever denomination, are bound to be subject; not for wrath, but conscience' sake. On the other hand, whilst the magistrate preserves religion, the dispensers and votaries of it, from abuse and insult; *it is not within his sphere to enact articles of faith*, to appoint ordinances of worship, to dispense these, or the censures of the church: far less has he authority, by pains and penalties, to force a profession of faith from any, or conformity to this or the other mode of worship. Such carnal weapons wound the conscience, by extorting an hypocritical confession, but cannot convince the judgment."\*

In the strongest manner also he condemns the arbitrary juris-

\* Discourses by James Baine, p. 237.

diction of church-courts, and the unscriptural procedure of those who set aside free-communion principles. "What more oppressive than to lay whole bodies of men, and many individuals, under even the severest censures, for not complying with things indifferent, and matters of doubtful disputation? Nay, for standing fast in that liberty wherewith Christ has made them free; the liberty of holding communion with visible saints; or those whose soundness in the faith, and holy life, are a strong presumption that they are the children of God; even though we be not of one mind in circumstantial and unimportant matters? For if diversity of opinion in unessentials be inconsistent with this fellowship, there can be no such thing as communion of saints on earth. For while here, we see darkly, and know but in part; and, consequently, cannot be like-minded in everything."\*

It was no doubt a very great loss to the Relief church to be bereft of a Father who could defend its principles with so much acumen; and who had long shown to many of his countrymen, who still clung to the Establishment, while they pronounced patronage antichristian, a far more excellent way. Still it was matter for the sincerest gratitude that he had been spared to mature old age, died in the esteem of his brethren,—left behind him a name to be long revered,—and had given a tone to the body which it would not soon lose. Hutchison, who had been at one time his assistant, and who had sat at his feet, had shown himself an able defender of Relief principles many years before Baine was gathered to his fathers. The residue of the Spirit is still with Jesus.

About the time that Baine died, attempts were being made by Messrs. Stewart of Anderston, Hutchison of Paisley, and Dun of Glasgow, to increase and improve the Psalmody of the Relief church, by introducing some of the hymns and paraphrases of the most approved Christian poets into their churches. Very gradual attempts were at first made, as the people of Scotland were strongly opposed to singing anything in public worship except the metrical version of the Psalms of David. Hymns, by Watts, an Independent, and Newton, an Episcopalian, were dreaded and shunned as savouring of heresy. Other denominations kept up the alarm as being another evidence of Relief latitudinarianism.

\* Discourses by James Baine, p. 245.

All the churches in Scotland had sadly retrograded in singing the praises of God during what were called the days of the Covenant. The earlier editions of the Psalms, after the Reformation, had generally prefixed a short music-book; and a few hymns, with a doxology or two, were added after the Psalms of David. Even the different Psalms, according to their metre and import, were set to appropriate tunes. These music-books gradually disappeared. Nothing but long metre and common were allowed to be sung; and the tunes were reduced to as few as could suffice for carrying on the worship of a single Sabbath. Various attempts were made at distant intervals by the Church of Scotland to enlarge its Psalmody, by uniting with the Psalms some other scripture songs. In the year 1647, the subject was mooted, but soon thereafter dropped into oblivion. After the Revolution, in 1688, it was revived; and, in 1708, a version of some sacred songs was printed for the use of families; and the commission were empowered "to examine it, and emit it for the use of the church." But here the matter stopped.\* The Land of Song had neither taste nor energy for cultivating "song" in the house of God. "The General Assembly, 1741, having had an overture brought before it for turning some parts of the Old and New Testaments into metre, to be used in churches as well as families," at last, after many remits and fruitless injunctions to presbyteries to report, an enlarged edition, with corrections, was again published for the use of families in 1751; and in this unfinished state the Paraphrases remained till 1781, when they were revised, adopted, and recommended to be used in churches. By a fine tact in selecting and arranging the passages of scripture paraphrased, the committee went regularly from Genesis to Revelation, and yet went over a little system of divinity, beginning with the creation and terminating with the happiness of heaven. As some of those who were in the committee of Psalmody were better poets than sound divines, several expressions are to be found in them which none but Arminians would have ventured to employ. The whole selection may be characterized as sweet, but destitute, in a great measure, of that depth of devotional and poetic feeling which so strikingly characterizes the Psalms. Many of them are mere recitations of scripture events, and not well adapted for congregational praise.

\* Advertisement to Scripture Songs, ninth edition. Glasgow: 1771.



The Burgher section of the Secession church made an early effort to improve and enlarge their Psalmody. Ralph Erskine, whose name can never be mentioned but with respect, had in him much of the poet, though his taste was not very refined, and his language was deformed by quaint expressions, and what may be called "gospel riddles." In 1748, he was requested by his brethren "to undertake a translation into metre of the songs of scripture, with the exception of the Psalms."\* He applied himself most diligently to the appointment, for it was in his cherished line of devotional study, and his productions were, after his death, published by his son "as scripture songs;" but they were never examined, improved, nor adopted by the synod. Scotland was still degenerating in its taste for Psalmody, and the strife engendered by the unfortunate division in the Secession was very injurious to the cultivation of the sweet and peaceful music of the sanctuary.

As the Church of Scotland had been very confined in her selection, admitting only what were strictly versions of particular portions of scripture, and as the evangelical portion of the community did not relish some of the improvements of Logan and Blair, the Relief church resolved to have a hymn book of its own. Messrs. Stewart, Hutchison, and Dun, took the lead in the matter, and it must be confessed in somewhat of an unpresbyterian way. They rather led than were guided by the synod. Mr. Stewart made a selection in 1792 of 180 hymns, which he printed and introduced into the worship of his church. The opposition was considerable. He had to appoint meetings, to reason the matter with his people. A few, rather than sing hymns of of human composition, left the church. Hutchison and Dun followed speedily in the wake of Stewart, adding to his collection a considerable number of hymns, going over some of the same subjects again, and thus marring the kind of systematic order which had at first been observed. The ice having been broken, an overture was brought into the synod in 1793 on the subject. It was ordered to be transmitted to the different presbyteries, and the ministers were required to turn their attention to it, that they might be prepared for its discussion at next meeting of synod. In 1794 the court agreed to enlarge their Psalmody by literal versions of particular portions of

\* M'Kerrow's History, First Ed. vol. ii. p. 197.

scripture, and also by hymns agreeable to the tenor of the word of God. A committee was appointed to select, collect, and prepare them; and submit them to the synod for its adoption. Messrs. Stewart, Hutchison, Dun, Struthers, &c., were the committee appointed, and they found themselves, even at that meeting of synod, prepared to report. To all appearance, this was barely keeping to the letter of the law, and manifestly breaking it in spirit. As might have been expected, and probably as was understood before their nomination, they recommended the adoption of Mr. Stewart's collection, with the additions of Messrs. Hutchison and Dun, as being a good selection of hymns, and already in use. The synod adopted their report, and recommended the ministers "to use the said selection in the praises of God, when they found that the same would answer the purposes of edification and peace."

This decision, and the hurried manner in which it was come to, met with very strenuous opposition from the Rev. Mr. Bell, of Dove-hill, Glasgow, who dissented, and gave in his reasons written out at considerable length. He considered Paraphrases unnecessary,—that the adopting of them opened up the way for endless additions, for if one was adopted why not another?—Besides, it was improper "to introduce hymns of human composure into the worship of God;"—and lastly, the matter had been gone into with too much precipitancy.

The synod allowed Mr. Bell's paper to be put on record, and proceeded with their measure; but knowing well his weight of character, and that similar sentiments were abroad in their churches, they found it necessary to prefix to their hymn book a preface which contains a very well written defence of the practice of singing hymns in the public worship of God. They acknowledged that the book of Psalms should be preferred to every other, but maintained that there is no reason why Christians should not sing the songs of Isaiah, and of John, as well as those of David and Asaph. From Eph. v. 18, 19; and Col. iii. 16, they considered that countenance was given to the singing hymns and sacred songs, different from the Old Testament Psalms; and, say they, it is matter of history, that the first Christians "sang hymns to Christ as to God." If churches use passages of the New Testament in their prayers, why not in their praises? In the one case they even frame their addresses to God in their own words, keeping them in accordance with the Bible, and why not in the other? The greater the diversity of spiritual matter in songs of praise the better. It

touches the different cords in the human bosom, and thereby promotes devotional feeling.

The opposition which at first appeared in various churches, in the course of a few years died away, and the synod hymn book was very generally adopted. It was followed by a corresponding improvement in church music; and the worship of "praise" became varied, animating, and peculiarly adapted to the doctrines of the gospel.

This selection of hymns continued untouched or unimproved till 1825, when an overture was adopted by the synod,—“That a committee be appointed for the improvement and enlargement of the hymns now in use;” and a committee, of which Mr. William Anderson, Glasgow, was convener, was appointed for the purpose. It was considered that many beautiful hymns had been written since the collection was originally made, and that the old collection was, in a great measure, confined to Watts, with a few from Newton and Doddridge; so that even at the time when it was made it might have been taken from a wider range of authors, if a little more time and diligence had been employed by the original collectors. It was also the opinion of synod, that more of those peculiar measures, in which many of the best hymns are written, might be introduced; while harsh and rugged expressions might, with a little attention, be removed or rendered more smooth and consistent with good taste.

When the committee set themselves to the work assigned them—which they did with great diligence, and prosecuted faithfully for years—they had many difficulties to contend with, and would have found it an easier task to make an entirely new collection, than to improve the old one. Persons had acquired a greater liking for some of the old hymns, from early associations, than their merits warranted. The aim of the committee was not to select a certain number of the best hymns in the English language, but to fix on all the great topics and ordinances of the Christian religion, and to select, if possible, a good hymn or two upon each, so that a minister should never be without an appropriate hymn after his sermon. The very best on some topics, after all, were found not to be very good. As the common version of the Psalms was to be retained as the chief source of sacred Psalmody, there was felt to be an impropriety in swelling the hymn book with new versions of the Psalms, unless a variety of metre was secured. This was acknowledged to be pecu-

liarily the case throughout the whole field of adoration; for there the Psalms of David are above all comparison superior to the productions of the most gifted of uninspired poets, even when they are attempting to paraphrase the words of scripture.

In making the selection, the committee were very much guided by the judgment of others. While they availed themselves of what they considered the best hymns of the sacred poets of Britain and America, they sent trial-copies of their selection to each member of synod, and asked his opinion and corrections. No hymn was admitted merely on account of its poetical excellence. Correctness of theological sentiment, ardent piety, simple scriptural expression, were deemed indispensable. After several years' diligent labour, a selection was produced and sanctioned by the synod in 1832. About one-half of the Assembly's paraphrases were adopted into it, as a portion of them are the best of Watts, considerably improved, and as no collection of hymns for public worship can be made without drawing liberally from this gifted poet,—of all uninspired sacred poets the prince. The improving taste of the country will in time admit into the collection more peculiar metres than the committee ventured to insert, and call for an enlarged and improved edition after several years' experience. The present hymn book has certainly contributed greatly to the respectability of the denomination, and to the pleasing advancement of warm, devout, and intelligent praise.\*

\* The edition of the Hymn Book, 12mo, 1842, by Mr. Jackson, Glasgow, contains the names of the authors of the different hymns, as correctly as could be ascertained. A Collection of Music, called 'The Sacred Choir,' has been published by the Rev. Mr. Anderson, Glasgow, specially adapted to the Collection of Hymns, sanctioned by the Synod of Relief.



## CHAPTER XXI.

### : EFFECTS OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.

THE French revolution shook the nations of Europe to their centre, levelled to the dust the throne of France, and scattered to the winds antiquated modes of thinking on almost every topic. It had a surprising influence upon the progress of religious liberty in Scotland, and, with some few drawbacks, was greatly favourable to the progress of truth and piety. It caused men to think for themselves who had previously been dreaming away their time, or founding their faith upon certain "decrees and canons" of their fathers, which were no longer applicable to a new state of society.

The first news of it were received in Scotland with the utmost delight. Its earliest struggles were considered as the pangs of approaching liberty. Its young representative government was hailed as the omen of the regeneration of Europe, the fall of Popery, and as introductory to the millennium of civil and religious blessedness. Not a few caught its reforming spirit, and thought that abuses which had crept into the British constitution might also be removed, and that new improvements might be introduced into it, as it had been reared in feudal times, and was not adapted to a mercantile community. Strenuous efforts were made to have the election of members of parliament placed upon a more popular basis. Fifty out of the fifty-six boroughs of Scotland petitioned parliament on the subject. Reform societies, composed of those who called themselves "The Friends of the People," were formed throughout the country to diffuse information, and take joint measures for reforming all national abuses. They met by delegation in a general convention at Edinburgh, to give life to the whole body, which was ramified throughout the country. The plan of those affiliated societies was taken from the clubs

of Paris, which, as channels of communication, had made France act as one man.

The French, in the intoxication of their success in overawing and breaking down the power of the king, nobles, and clergy, were soon carried into great excesses. They were maddened by the voice of universal acclamation; and, trembling lest they should be again enthralled, they, in their excited frenzy, introduced what has been aptly styled, "the Reign of Terror." All the old institutions of the country were demolished. The nobles were slain, or banished, their property confiscated, and divided among the people. The king was beheaded in the midst of his own subjects. Religious worship was suppressed. The old Catholic Establishment of religion was trodden in the dust. Their cry was—No altars,—no masses,—no priests,—no other god but the God of nature. The seventh-day Sabbath was superseded by a decree of the Convention, which appointed one day of rest in ten; and over the gates of their burying-grounds there was set up the inscription,—*Death is an eternal sleep.*

These were excesses which the enlightened reformers of Scotland deeply deplored; and which they saw evidently would cover the cause with disgrace. They apologized for the new-born sons of freedom by stating, that they had never known Christianity but as the "Man of Sin;" and that, after the first burst of indignation, during which they had confounded Popery and true religion, they would return to sounder views, without yielding slavish subjection to the see of Rome. A few of what might be called "the baser sort," were so fascinated with every thing French, and so unable to discern any difference between priestcraft and Christianity, that they became infected with the novel doctrine of French infidelity, and, in contending for the "rights of man," gloried in living under "the age," not of revelation, but "of reason." These were wandering stars, few of whom ever returned again to their own orbit, and they did incalculable harm to the cause of truth and liberty.

The aristocracy and the Established church first took the alarm. Political associations were formed to counteract the doctrines of the French revolution. The British constitution was held to be the best that ever was since the creation of the world; and, farther, that it was not possible to make it better. No pin of it was to be touched. Reform of every kind, and in the smallest degree, was proscribed as a matter which was not even to be de-

bated. Nobles, clergy, and almost every man of property and influence, united in one great confederation to counteract all attempts at change, and to control and silence their dependents. The power of the civil law was called into exercise; and men were seized, tried, and transported as guilty of sedition, whose example, after the tempest of the French revolution had fully spent itself, nevertheless showed to the men of the next generation how a reform in parliament was to be sought, struggled for, and won.

The effect of the French revolution upon the Church of Scotland was salutary for its orthodoxy, but it greatly increased its bigotry and close corporate spirit. Previous to the convulsive heavings of France, the moderate party were far more numerous than the evangelical, and allowing themselves great latitude in speculating on the doctrines of Christianity, were disposed to remodel the Confession of Faith; and, if government would not consent, they would rather forego altogether a state connection, than have their conscience trammelled by a human creed, and be compelled to sign a *formula* which they did not believe. Principal Robertson had endeavoured to quell this restless spirit of innovation; and, still feeling its untoward pressure, he had, from this and other causes, resigned the leadership of the church; but, when the crisis of the French revolution came, the most speculative were speedily tamed. Declarations were issued by the church courts in favour of its doctrines, constitution, and standards. The press teemed with publications and sermons, calling upon the people to rally round the throne and the altar; and to preserve the Establishment entire if they would preserve religion. It is not known that any minister of the Establishment who had become a convert to those new views, which were now being vigorously checked, had the honesty to give up his benefice save one solitary individual. The Rev. Hugh Mitchell, minister of Glasford, laid his resignation upon the table of the Presbytery of Hamilton, and afterwards published an apology for his conduct. "It became an article in my creed," says he, "that the church of Christ can have no sort of connection with civil establishments, except in things purely civil;" and on this conviction he resigned his charge.\*

He held Socinian views, but declares that others of his brethren went farther than he did, and were even infidel in their private opin-

\* A Short Apology for Apostacy, by Hugh Mitchell, M.A., late Priest of Glasford. Glasgow: 1797.

ions. Certain it is that the French revolution quieted the symptoms of prurient heresy quicker, and more effectually, in the Church of Scotland, than all the processes which had ever been instituted and prosecuted by the combined influence of parish associations throughout the land. When the House was felt to tremble, all combined with one accord to prop it up.

The French revolution also produced perceptible changes in the Relief church, but somewhat different from those which it produced in the Establishment. It was welcomed among them with gladness. Like the dissenters in England, they rejoiced that thirty millions of people, indignant and resolute, were spurning slavery, demanding liberty, and that "a general amendment was beginning in human affairs. The dominion of kings changed for the dominion of laws, and the dominion of priests giving way to the dominion of reason and conscience."\*

The Declaration of Rights, which was sanctioned by the king, and which formed the basis of the new constitution of France, contained many principles which they, as dissenters, fondly cherished. Being conscientiously opposed to all intolerance in religion, and all restraints on the discussion of speculative points, they could not but hail the appearance of such enlightened civil maxims as the following in the new constitution of despotic and papal France: "No man ought to be molested on account of his opinions, not even on account of his religious opinions, provided his avowal of them does not disturb the public order established by the law.—The unrestrained communication of thoughts and opinions being one of the most precious rights of man, every citizen may speak, write, and publish freely, provided he is responsible for the abuse of this liberty in cases determined by the law."†

Even after the king was beheaded, and the papal establishment of religion was put down in France, the religious part of the British community still looked upon the revolution with a favourable eye. The students of prophecy had long been of opinion that France, the tenth part of the city of mystical Babylon, must fall before Popery was to be overthrown, and preparation made for the introduction of the millennium. The whole country was filled with pamphlets on the subject.

In this state of matters, it could not be expected that men,

\* Price's Discourse on the Love of our Country, p. 41.

† Basis of the New Constitution of France, sections 10, 11.



holding such views as the fathers of the Relief church did, as to civil establishments of religion, would be disconcerted with the tidings from France about the annihilation of the Papal established church. While they abhorred infidelity, and pitied the suffering priests, they yet hoped, according to the views of the best expositors of Prophecy, that establishments were to be the dust of His feet, when he would come to set up his kingdom. It is therefore observable, that the tone of the Relief publications at this period was very different from those of the Established ministers. So far from being filled with fear, they were full of hope. The Rev. Mr. Smith of Kilbride, afterwards of College-street, Edinburgh, published a discourse preached on a Government Fast in 1795, in which he not only condemns all establishments in the most uncompromising language, and shows, according to the title of his sermons, that "the alliance of church and state (is) an ancient political engine;" but even points to the French revolution as a harbinger of good.

Though Mr. Smith was said to have received a hint from a certain law-officer that his conduct was watched, and that it would be as well to suppress the circulation of his discourse, yet he was never interfered with, and his sermon covertly received a rapid and extensive circulation. It was not seditious. Others held the same opinions; and though judges were then exercising "a rigour beyond the law," it would have savoured of the despotism of the Inquisition to have punished discussions on the constitution of the church of Christ. Other Relief ministers cherished the same sentiments as Mr. Smith. Mr. Colquhoun of Campsie, in 1796, published his 'Plan of Christian Union,' in opposition to the 'Plan of Federal Union, by the Rev. James Lapslie;' and in it he not only contends for the annihilation of establishments, but declares that "he is only acquainted with two or three old men, among all the dissenting clergy, who are not of the same views."\* So much was Hutchison enamoured of the rising liberties of France, and offended at Britain interfering to crush them, that he became the object of attack in the Glasgow Courier, and a small portion of his congregation, of different sentiments from himself, caballed against him, published a pamphlet, and withdrew from his ministry.

We are not, however, to suppose that the Relief ministers were swallowed up of politics, and shunned to turn even the

\* P. 108.

political sentiments of the period into a right channel, and take men as if by guile. The Rev. Mr. Stewart of Anderston, who was a leading person in the synod, and a man of great practical wisdom, in his sermon on 'A Plan of Reform proposed to the Christian People,' preached 1793, showed how the momentous events were to be improved. "There are few periods in the history of Europe in which the minds of men have been more keenly agitated, their passions more inflamed, and kingdoms more violently convulsed, than the present. A discontented and turbulent spirit prevails at home; an ancient and powerful monarchy has been overthrown abroad; other mighty nations are alarmed, and dread insurrection and convulsion too. The same cause has produced these wonderful effects,—a prevailing rage for reform. I would therefore seize the spirit of the times, and thence take occasion to exhibit to the Christian people a plan of moral reform.

"Our national prosperity is unparalleled in the page of history; but national prosperity has always produced luxury, luxury has produced licentiousness, idleness, dissipation, and a general depravity of mind and manners; these have degraded and debased society, they have destroyed private virtue and public spirit, and precipitated the decline and downfall of the greatest kingdoms. If these evils are not checked in their fatal progress, they will soon destroy that magnificent constitutional fabric which our fathers built, and built at the expense of much blood and treasure. The foundation of it was laid at the glorious Revolution, after-ages added to its beauty and splendour; but while it received gradual improvements, through length of time it may have received damages too; and if it has, wise and virtuous legislators will undoubtedly repair them, and will even amend and improve the original plan, where the matured experience of ages has found material defects. This will allay our political ferment, will hush the rising storm into a calm; and peace, and love, and harmony, will bless the happy realm."\*

With such sentiments as these, Relief ministers tempered the spirit of the times, sweetened the breath of society, and while they rejoiced in the progress of religious liberty, and the downfall of Popery, they yet strove to keep each man's conscience busy in checking his own misdeeds, expelling his own pollutions, and thus made peaceful subjects, by teaching their people to be humble, serious, and obedient to the King of kings.

\* Stewart's Plan of a Reform, pp. 3, 25.

The Secession church did not escape the sifting and liberalizing influence of the French revolution. It was benefited thereby more than any other section of the church of Christ. The happy effects were somewhat slowly manifested amid much opposition, but she came forth greatly purified, and constituted herself more directly upon the word of God. The fire of controversy burnt up all the hay and stubble which she discovered she had hitherto been heaping upon the true foundation.

The long protracted controversy with Mr. Hutchison, together with the improved forms of government set up both in America and France, in which the civil magistrate was not permitted to interfere with religion, led many of the Seceders to examine the old covenanting doctrine about kings fostering Christianity with civil penalties, and punishing heresies with the sword; and, like good men with the word of God in their hand, which with the light of experience they were now able to study, many of them began to entertain more correct views about the spiritual nature of the Messiah's kingdom, and saw that there were expressions in their standards which it might be as well to drop.

Within the pale of both sides of the Secession there sprung up men who obtained new light about the covenants and the rights of conscience, and who came bravely forward and proclaimed the fact. In 1790, Graham of Newcastle published 'A Candid Vindication of the Secession Church,' in which he declared, that the Jewish or Erastian sense of the covenants was "absurd" and "antichristian;" and that "national covenanting, under the New Testament dispensation, is 'an agreement among all, or the greater part of particular churches throughout a nation, to strengthen one another's hands, and encourage one another's hearts in mutual fellowship, walking by the same rule, and minding the same things.'"<sup>\*</sup> He also maintained, that among Christians living in communion with each other, there might be "diversity of sentiment about those things, which, though they be divine truths and of considerable importance, are, on account of the obscurity attending them, on the minds of men in their investigation, matters of doubtful disputation."<sup>†</sup> This was all but harmonizing with the views of Hutchison; and if he was still behind him in his opinions as to toleration, he speedily became his successful rival in vindicating the spiritual constitution

<sup>\*</sup> P. 30.

<sup>†</sup> P. 43.

of the church of Christ. In 1792, he re-wrote, improved, and extended his tract against "patronage" already referred to, and published it under the form of 'A Review of the Ecclesiastical Establishments of Europe.' In this powerfully written and elaborate treatise, he, with the most unhesitating conviction of its truth, pronounces the alliance between church and state unscriptural, opposed to the genius of Christianity, fatal to its interests, and dangerous to the civil state. This volume making its appearance at the era of the French revolution, fell upon the public mind, and especially upon the Antiburgher synod, with great power, and startled many to the consideration of what they had been hitherto inertly believing. It was like a new revelation.

On the Burgher side of the Secession there were not wanting talented and liberal-minded men who had adopted the same scriptural views. In 1770, the Rev. Archibald Hall, Burgher minister in London, in his 'Essay on Church-fellowship,' and again in his pamphlet, 'Tekel,' published next year, laid down such sweeping principles as the following:—"The church being *the kingdom of Christ*, she must acknowledge no judge, king, or law-giver, but Christ;—not being of *this world*, she must be spiritual in her constitution, and independent of the pleasure and authority of men."\* "A church built upon tradition, former reformatations, *acts of civil Establishment*, or anything human, is not the church of Christ."† In behalf of these and such like sentiments, he quotes Mr. Graham's pamphlet on Patronage, as harmonizing with his opinions.‡ Amid increasing light, others afterwards discerned that Christianity was the friend of civil government, but could not be taken into alliance with it.

The Antiburgher side of the Secession took the lead in remodelling their standards. In 1791, the matter was noticed, and the first steps were taken for disclaiming the recognition of those passages in the Confession of Faith which sanction the interference of the civil magistrate in matters of religion. A particular application, in 1796, was made on behalf of Mr., afterwards Dr. M'Crie, and Mr. M'Ewan, by the presbytery of Edinburgh, that they should be allowed to qualify their adherence to the Confession about the power of the civil magistrate in religion, otherwise they would not receive ordination

\* Hall on Church-fellowship, p. 16. 1770.

† An Impartial Survey of Tekel, p. 17.

‡ See Plain Proof by Dr. James Watt, p. 51. Glasgow: 1796.



in the Secession church. In these circumstances, and impelled by public opinion, and their own convictions of duty, they passed an interim act, in which they “excepted to everything in the Confession which, taken by itself, seems to allow the punishment of good and peaceable subjects on account of their religious opinions and observances,—that they approve of no other means of bringing men into the church, or retaining them in it, than such as are spiritual, and were used by the apostles and other ministers of the word in the first ages of the Christian church—persuasion, not force; the power of the gospel, not the sword of the magistrate.” This was the first breach for the letting in of the waters which were afterwards to refresh and give life to the Secession church, and to adapt her to the existing state of things, and the great principles of religious liberty.

The interim act in favour of Messrs. M’Crie and M’Ewan, paved the way for improving the original Testimony. It was adopted and published in 1804; and, while it is far more favourable to the Relief denomination than the improved “Judicial Testimony” of the Burghers, already discussed, it is not what might have been expected, seeing the Antiburghers were now coming so much into unity with Relief principles. How difficult to get rival sects to speak of each other with becoming candour! After complaining of the free communion principles of the Relief church, they add—“The following appear to be principles held by them:—That though they have made a separation from the National Church, yet they have freedom to join with her occasionally, in the most intimate acts of church-fellowship. They avow the warrantableness of promiscuous hearing even in churches that are very corrupt. They are known, with a very few exceptions, to be enemies to the duty of public covenanting; and they distinguish divine truths into what they call *essential* and *circumstantial*; by the latter of which, some of them say, are meant, those things in revelation about which men may differ, and yet be real Christians. These they hold to be of such a trivial nature, as not to be worth contending for, at least not so far as to break up communion with persons on account of any opposition which they manage against them.

“It appears, that if they adopt the Confession of Faith as a test of orthodoxy, they neglect to enforce conformity to it. Though some of them, it is hoped, preach the doctrines of the gospel, yet it appears from their publications, that some of their members are

accustomed to use erroneous expressions as to some of those doctrines, which lie very near the foundation of the hopes of sinners for eternity.”\*

What a qualified statement! “Some of them, it is hoped, preach the doctrines of the gospel.” Hutchison’s *Compend of Relief Doctrine* is referred to as containing erroneous expressions; and, as this is inserted in the Appendix, every reader can satisfy himself by turning to it. It will bear inspection, and command approbation.

The same subject,—the removal of all persecuting clauses from their standard books, came before the Burgher Secession synod in 1795; and, after discussing the power of the magistrate in religious matters, with much keenness during several meetings of synod, they at length, amid great opposition, yet to be mentioned, agreed to make both it and national covenanting matters of forbearance. Religious liberty, and scriptural views of the constitution of the church of Christ, thus made rapid strides among them during the discussions produced by the organization of the American commonwealth without a religious Establishment, and the convulsive overthrow of the Papal Established Church of France.

The greatest religious change, however, produced in Scotland at this era, remains yet to be noticed. From the detail of facts published in pamphlets, by Mr. Robert Haldane, and also by the Rev. Greville Ewing, “the Tabernacle people,” as they were first called, were raised up to supply the gospel under a new denomination, at a time when the public mind was excited, and prepared to listen to an order of religious teachers, who had more of activity, and less of form to cramp their exertions than any other of the older denominations. Before the French revolution, Robert Haldane, proprietor of the beautiful estate of Airthrie, near Stirling, was living, like many other country gentlemen, improving and beautifying his possessions, engrossed with country pursuits, little concerned about the general interests of mankind, and selfishly and unthankfully enjoying the blessings which God had so bountifully shed around him.†

The news from France, and the multitude of books and pamphlets which the Revolution called forth, drew his attention

\* Narrative and Testimony, pp. 89, 90.

† Address to the Public concerning Political Opinions, by Robert Haldane, &c. Passim, 1800.

strongly to the changes which were then taking place. "He thought he saw in them a scene of melioration and improvement dawning upon the world, and he trusted that the universal abolition of slavery, of war, and of many other miseries which mankind were exposed to, would speedily take place; for these appeared wholly to result from the false principles upon which the ancient governments had been constructed. He exulted in the prospect. He rejoiced in the experiment that was making in France of the construction of a government at once, from its foundation, upon a regular plan, which Hume, in his *Essays*, speaks of as an event so much to be desired."\*

At a county meeting in Stirling, held for the purpose of raising volunteers, and stimulating the public mind in favour of the war which had been declared against revolutionary France, he delivered a prepared speech upon his favourite topic, and henceforward, among persons of his own rank in life, he was known and shunned as a favourer of French principles. The enormities which succeeded the outburst of the *Révolution* damped, for a time, his ardent expectations. Still he ascribed the bloody scenes to the degraded state of France during the ancient despotic government, and trusted that these cruelties would cease as the people enjoyed the meliorating influence of education and liberty.

At that time Mr. Haldane was a decent moral man, making a general profession of religion, but ignorant of his lost state by nature, of the deep depravity of the human heart, the purity of the divine law, and the way of salvation by the obedience and sufferings of Jesus. Several of the clergymen of Stirling, particularly Mr. Innes, frequented his house, and endeavoured to lead him to right views of divine truth, and persuade him that universal peace and justice would never be attained by the mere construction of any system of government in the present corrupt state of human nature, till it was regenerated and sanctified by the influence of the gospel. They endeavoured to convince him that the disease lay deeper than the surface; and as they considered him a sincere inquirer after truth, nights were spent in conversation and inquiry upon the subject. In process of time the evangelical doctrines of the cross came home with power upon his heart. His own language on the occasion is the best index of his feelings. "Whatever good or harm the study of politics may have done to others,

they certainly led the way to much good to me. When they began to be talked of, I was led to consider every thing anew. I eagerly caught at them as a pleasing speculation. As a fleeting phantom, they eluded my grasp: but missing the shadow, I caught the substance; and while obliged to abandon these confessedly unsatisfactory speculations, I obtained, in some measure, the solid consolations of the gospel." Under the influence of religious truth the thought struck him that he was spending his time to little purpose, and that with his property he might originate a mission to the East Indies. He resolved to go himself along with his wife and daughter, and to engage a number of missionaries, of the highest character, to go with him at his sole expense.

In the prosecution of this noble scheme, Mr. Haldane secured the consent of the Rev. Messrs. Bogue of Gosport, Innes of Stirling, and Greville Ewing of Edinburgh, to go along with him, and to devote themselves to the cause of God on the continent of India. One is overpowered in speculating on what might have been the effect of so much talent, learning, and worth, exerting their influence upon millions of men. It was to be otherwise. The French revolution had roused the dormant mind of Haldane to form one of the most philanthropic plans that had ever been conceived; but his being known as a favourer of French politics, and an enemy to religious establishments, as being inconsistent with the genius of the gospel, (which he did not conceal,) worldly politicians and servile clergymen blasted the whole of the project. The directors of the East India company refused their consent, and the missionary societies, though importuned by him, would not move in his favour. It is to the honour of Dr. Balfour, that when the Glasgow Missionary society, on a hint from head-quarters, would not memorialize the East India company, he entered his dissent against such political trimming.

Being compelled to remain at home even after his estate had been sold, Mr. Haldane and his associates did not give up their plans of doing good, though their field was changed. Their Christian efforts were directed to Scotland in room of India. Having his capital now at his command, instead of being locked up in land, they exerted themselves in setting up Sabbath schools, distributing tracts and books, and visiting different districts of the country for the purpose of doing good. Haldane was the mainspring in setting up the Society for Propagating the Gospel at Home. He



employed lay and clerical itinerants, as will yet be more fully shown, in preaching the gospel in the most destitute parts of the country, and particularly where error was preached within the pale of the Establishment. He considered the old staid formalities of Presbyterian order as the consummation of dust and idleness; and he resolved to set up, throughout the country, a new spiritual agency, untrammelled by courts and clerical rules.

He was virulently attacked by many of the regular clergy, both established and dissenting, as following measures which were destructive of all church order; and some of the established ministers particularly, attacked his system of lay preaching, as subversive of the institutions of the country, and intended to sap the foundations of the Church of Scotland. The controversy was mainly carried on in a succession of sermons and pamphlets between the Rev. Greville Ewing, of Lady Glenorchy's chapel, Edinburgh, and the Rev. John Robertson, Cambuslang. The two principal objections urged against itinerancy were: 1. That field preaching was hostile to the order and safety of the church; and, 2. It was dangerous to the state. It was certainly easy for a Christian to dispose of these two objections, when Christ himself—with reverence be it recorded—was a field preacher.

Mr. Haldane had always, from the time of his conversion, been opposed to establishments as unscriptural; but this controversy loosened the attachment of Mr. Ewing also to the Church of Scotland, and to all state churches, as fettering the spread of gospel; and as opposing the command of Christ, to make the the whole world, without any restrictions, the field on which to scatter the seed of the word. This led to the resignation of his charge. He left the Establishment.

The vigorous and active mind of Mr. Haldane being under the warming influence of first love, and fired with zeal for the good of men, was not to be checked by old-fashioned notions, which the rising spirit of the country was now disposed to break and cast away. He gathered heat by the roughness of the road over which he travelled. Circumstances showed him an unexpected way of doing good, and he, with great cleverness and energy, adopted it, and wrought it at least for a time with great effect.

During the time that the Relief church, College-street, was rebuilding, the congregation met on Sabbath for public worship in the Edinburgh circus. The thing was novel. Crowds resorted thither, partly attracted by curiosity, to see a minister

preaching from a stage. The Rev. James Struthers, the pastor, was a young man of the most fascinating address. Nature made him an orator, and study and taste made him one of the most polished speakers that ever addressed an audience. Many of those who went once, readily found their way back again; and during the whole time he preached in it, he was attended by listening crowds, who gladly followed him to his new, spacious, and elegant church, when it was opened. The circus being left by the Relief congregation, Mr. Haldane, and a few other persons who wished to see the interests of religion extended in Edinburgh, conceived the idea of converting it into a Tabernacle, after the plan of those of Whitefield, where preaching would be kept up by a succession of ministers, and where the accommodation would be free to all. The attempt was made. The circus was hired for three months. The Rev. Rowland Hill—so well-known as an able and successful evangelist—was brought down from England, and opened the place for public worship. Multitudes heard him, the circus was crowded to overflowing, and Mr. Haldane was encouraged to go on. When Rowland Hill left him, Mr. Haldane's mind was filled with the brightest prospects. As the Edinburgh Tabernacle was doing so much good, he resolved to set up similar institutions in Glasgow, Dundee, and the other large towns throughout Scotland. The Glasgow circus was bought, and fitted up as a place of worship. A large Tabernacle was erected at Dundee. Mr. Ewing became the stated minister at Glasgow, Mr. Innes, who had now also left the Establishment, was located at Dundee, and Captain James Haldane, who had resigned his commission in the navy to promote the spiritual good of his native country, was appointed to remain at Edinburgh.

A new denomination was now formed—churches on the Independent plan were organized—and everything externally augured abundant success. But there was a worm at the root, which afterwards displayed itself, and which was the source of many troubles, and great bitterness of spirit. It was engendered rather by the rapid concoction of the system than by anything bad in the men. The Tabernacle plan was undoubtedly an instrument in the hand of God for effecting incalculable good. The public taste was running high against Establishments, and the supposed tyranny and representative character of all Presbyterian church courts. The new denomination was opposed to religious Estab-

lishments. It was formed, in its government, on Independent principles, and gave the church members the power of managing every thing themselves without any delegation. It was sound in its doctrinal and evangelical views; and could promise, on rational grounds, that what the Puritans or Independents had done for England, they would do for Scotland, holding, as they did, the same principles, and preaching the same truths. Time, and coming events, however, soon wrought changes in the Tabernacle system of religious worship, while they infused fresh blood into the older denominations of the country.

## CHAPTER XXII.

MISSIONARY EXERTIONS WHICH FOLLOWED THE FRENCH REVOLUTION—RELIEF HIGHLAND MISSION—BREAKING UP OF THE TABERNACLE SCHEME.

IF the branches of a barren fruit-tree are partially broken, it begins to bear fruit. It becomes alarmed lest it should be destroyed, and its name put out of existence, and it puts forth its energies in the production of seed to generate itself. The church of Christ, taking in all sects and parties, both in Scotland and in the other countries in Europe, prior to the French revolution, was dormant, and was gradually suffering herself to be assimilated to the world. The alarm produced by the overthrow of the Church of France, and the spread of infidelity, roused the church from her sleep, and she instantly began to put on her beautiful garments, and to diffuse those life-giving principles which were antagonist to infidelity. Societies for the defence of the truth and the propagation of Christianity were formed in every quarter. The institution of the London Missionary Society, in September, 1795, on a catholic basis, and upon an extensive scale, gave a surprising impetus to the cause of Christianity, and the necessity of missions. Christians of various evangelical denominations came forward with a unanimity, zeal, and liberality, which were, in the estimation of many, the presages of the millennium. The flame kindled in the metropolis, quickly spread over the whole country. Scotland caught the religious ardour, and burst forth into a blaze. In the beginning of 1796, missionary societies, either in connection with that of London, or independent of it, and willing to co-operate with other kindred institutions in sending the gospel to the heathen, were formed in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Stirling, Kelso, Paisley, Greenock, Perth, Dundee. Money was poured into their treasuries, and the largest churches could not contain the crowds that flocked to their prayer-meetings. A new era had



dawned upon the Christian world, and Churchmen and Dissenters, with a few exceptions, vied with each other in expressions of good-will, and of warm resolutions to follow joint measures in carrying the gospel to every creature.

The synod of Relief, as a church court, took the lead in declaring itself favourable to missions, and in taking measures to set up a mission for the purpose of diffusing the gospel in the Highlands of Scotland. At its meeting on the 18th of May, 1796, it unanimously adopted the following overtures:—

“I. That all the members of this synod shall encourage the laudable spirit of zeal which has been excited in various parts of this kingdom, to send the knowledge of salvation to the heathen nations, and shall unite their exertions with any society that may be formed to promote such a good and great design.

“II. That while the stream of public benevolence has begun to flow, and promises soon to refresh many foreign lands, some exertions should be made to water the wilderness and solitary places at home. And considering the present state of religion in the Highlands of Scotland, they resolve to appoint a committee to draw up a scheme for sending evangelical ministers, or probationers, to those parts, and to open a subscription to enable the synod to carry this design into execution.”

This committee, of which the Rev. Mr. Stewart, Anderston, was convener, being appointed to draw up regulations for the mission, collect subscriptions, and present the matter in a matured form at next meeting of synod, were not inattentive to their duty. They made a judicious report, and the measure was adopted not from party spirit, nor from any desire to oppose the laudable exertions of the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge, that had been in existence since 1709, in connection with the Church of Scotland, and which had mainly for its object the extension of religion in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland; but with the benevolent design of being fellow-labourers with them in the same field.

Several years before this period, the Glasgow Relief Presbytery had made an effort to introduce the gospel into the Highlands, and had been driven from the field. Now the synod resolved to take up the matter again, and to make a more combined and vigorous effort. The small primary mission from which the general synodical measure sprang, affords such a specimen of the monopolizing and persecuting spirit of the times, that it would

be wrong to pass it over merely by a simple reference to its existence.

Somewhere about the year 1786, in the united parish of Kilbrandon and Kilchattan, in which is situated the slate-quarry of Easdale, a great number of people were brought under serious impressions. Dr. John Smith, who was afterwards minister of Campbelton, was then a young man, and officiated as assistant to the minister of the parish. He was an excellent Gaelic scholar. Lady Glenorchy, who was always watchful to do good, soon found him out in the Western Isles, and employed him to translate ‘Alleine’s Alarm to the Unconverted’ into Gaelic. When engaged in this work, he delivered the whole of it from the pulpit; and the effect was soon visible among the people. When the translation was finished, every family possessed themselves of a copy. As the parish consisted of two islands, with a strong tidal current running between them, it was at times both a tedious and difficult work to ferry over the worshippers from the one to the other, on the Sabbath morning. The time of their assembling for worship could not be very regular. To occupy the attention of the people, who were early at church, in a profitable manner, Mr. Smith introduced the practice of the precentor reading from the desk a part of his favourite author. Other parishes soon followed the example. A surprising concern about religion was rapidly and extensively diffused among the people. They formed themselves into *fellowship* meetings for prayer, conversation, and reading the scriptures. Their proficiency in the knowledge of the scriptures became remarkable. They could not bear to see the Sabbath profaned. They were cut to the heart by the doctrine which they often heard preached, as being another gospel from that of Jesus. They could not even curb themselves from openly rebuking some of their clergymen for their ungodly practices.

This, however, was touching the sore too directly, and it may be by plain people a little too roughly. Anger, and wrath, and persecution, in a variety of forms, were stirred up against them. A presbytery was called. The book was tried and condemned as containing twenty-two dangerous errors. Precentors were charged not to read it from their desks. Private families were forbidden to retain a copy of it on pain of excommunication. The place where the people assembled for prayer was surrounded, and alarming threats were vented that it would be torn down about

their heads. They were called in derision—" *The people of the great faith.*" They were declared to be mad. When the communion was dispensed, railings and invectives against them constituted the main topics of the pulpit harangues. All were commanded to shun them. Mr. Smith had by this time got a presentation to Campbelton, and he refused to move his little finger on their behalf.

Deserted by all, and almost driven to madness by painful and harassing annoyances, their case was represented to Lady Glenorchy, who resolved, if possible, to cherish the seed of the divine word which had been so extensively sown, and which was putting forth the blade and the ear in that desert region. It was vain to apply to the Establishment. Even the good men in the church could not interfere within the limits of a sister presbytery which had condemned "*the mad people.*" She, therefore, through a friend, applied to the Relief presbytery of Glasgow to send some person to the district who could preach in Gaelic; and if appearances warranted the step after examination, she promised to build a chapel, and support the minister. The application was readily acceded to. A preacher was sent to the spot. Mr. Pinkerton of Campbelton was instructed to go with him, and succour him at the commencement of his labours, as there were many difficulties to be overcome. The people were waiting for them in their boats, received them kindly, and conveyed them to the land. They now cherished the expectation that their persecutions were about to terminate, and that they would enjoy liberty of conscience, and have the gospel freely and faithfully preached to them. A short time convinced them that there was not a spot on which they would be permitted to rest "the sole of their foot." Their enemies became exceedingly fierce. They maligned their new minister, and stirred up the proprietor not to grant them an inch of ground on which to build a chapel. After labouring some months among them with great acceptance, Mr. Douglas had to retire from a place where the heathen governor of Melita would have been a jewel compared to the lord of the soil—Christian though he called himself. In such a rugged climate, open air preaching could not be continued for any length of time. Amid the tokens of God's gracious presence, and the frowns of earthly greatness, the mission was unavoidably brought to a close.

As an example of the evil treatment to which the people were subjected for encouraging sectaries, and daring to think on re-

ligious matters for themselves, the family that received Messrs. Pinkerton and Douglas into their house, when they arrived on the island, were threatened with the loss of their farm. Their lease was nearly expired. The threat was not forgotten. When the term of renewing the lease came round, they were turned out of its possession, and forced to go into a cot-house. The reason assigned in certain quarters was, that they would not part with any of their sons for the army; but the true reason was considered to be, their showing hospitality to Relief ministers. Lady Glenorchy talked of giving them a farm, as sufferers for the sake of conscience; but nothing was ever done, and the grave soon closed over the more aged of them with its friendly embrace, and hid them from the scorn of a wicked and persecuting world.

The synod, in refitting its mission in the years 1796-7, bestowed considerable pains upon its proper management, and endeavoured as much as possible to divest it of a sectarian character, and to make it the instrument of much spiritual good. They appointed the Rev. Messrs. Douglas, Dundee, and M'Naught, Dumbarton, as their missionaries for the first year, fixed on the shire of Argyle as the scene of their missionary labours, and recommended to all their ministers and congregations to be earnest at a throne of grace for their success.

In the beginning of July 1797, the missionaries began their labours in Argyleshire. They commenced at Southend, and aided much in furthering the Relief church there, which the people, with the countenance of the Duke of Argyle, were erecting. They had become greatly dissatisfied with their minister. Upwards of ninety heads of families presented a petition to Argyle for ground on which to build a church. An attempt was made to reconcile the people of the parish to their clergyman. It failed. The prospect was held out of his removal from them; but they exclaimed with one voice, that they could not take a minister whom the Established presbytery of Campbeltown would appoint over them. The gentleman who had been sent from Edinburgh to examine into the matter upon the spot, having made his report, the Duke instantly sent them a letter, appointing them ground for a church, manse, and glebe, with the plan of a village, and encouragement to persons who would build houses of certain dimensions. In all this there was an enlightened ecclesiastical policy, worthy of a family which had bled for Presbyterian parity, and the rights of conscience.



The people throughout the whole of Argyleshire showed the greatest kindness to the missionaries. In the thinly scattered parishes of Barr, Clachan, Kilmodan, &c., they were generally attended by large audiences, varying from 500 to 1,000 individuals. The attention of the people was fixed, and they eagerly followed the preachers from place to place. One example must be taken as a specimen of their general demeanour. "At Killeen, fourth Sabbath of July, the number of the people who attended were thought not to be fewer than fifteen hundred, some of them from a considerable distance, chiefly men, by reason of the badness of the morning. Had the day proved good, the number, it was thought, would have been nigh doubled. The tent was erected in the churchyard, in the shelter of the ruins of an old chapel. So heavy and constant was the rain, that it came in streams through the tent, so as to make it scarce possible to read the verses that were expounded. Yet the people stood with great composure all the time, many of them to all appearance deeply affected; and, I desire to record it to the praise of God, notwithstanding the inclemency of the day, I humbly hope it was a day of the Son of man. The tears of many visibly flowed, notwithstanding their efforts to conceal them, and their deep sighs and moans might be easily heard. O what a contrast betwixt their appearance, and the appearance of a people whose hearts are grown callous under the gospel! They stood like statues under the heavy rain, while deep concern seemed painted in every look, and every eye was fixed on the speaker. At the close numbers were overheard to say, The Lord pity us; we have been all our days in ignorance!"\*

The clergy, however, over the whole of the district, gave the missionaries the greatest possible opposition, and dissuaded the people from attending them as dangerous characters, who were hostile to the civil and religious interests of the country. When exhortations proved vain, they had recourse to clerical domination. For example, at the close of one of the missionary's sermons, "a man appeared at the skirt of the congregation, lifting up his hand, and making the following proclamation or advertisement, in the Gaelic language; 'This is to give notice to you, the folk of this parish, that if any of you hear this man to-day, you will receive neither baptism, marriage, nor communion from

\* Journal of a Mission to part of the Highlands, in the Summer and Harvest, 1797, p. 57.

Mr. Alister,' i. e. Alexander. This strange declaration excited, as might be expected, a general murmuring. The old people remarked, with great simplicity, in their own language; 'Thanks to God, our occasion for marriage and baptism is over, else it will not be for our good; and as for the communion, if he will not give it, the Good One can make it up some other way.' " \*

At the time when this mission was sent into Argyleshire, the district was in a most pitiable state. The ministers were, many of them, Socinian or Arminian in their sentiments. They were generally deeply immersed in farming, fishing, or trading in sheep and cattle; and their official duties were very perfunctorily performed, if they were performed at all. The instances on record are so numerous and glaring, that charity would fondly cast her mantle over them were they not authenticated from a variety of sources. The Rev. John Campbell, of Kingsland Chapel, London, who, a few years thereafter, went over the same district, says of it, that for 70 miles, except in the town of Campbellton, there was not a minister that preached the gospel. †

On the return of the missionaries, deep interest was excited in Paisley and Glasgow, and listening crowds were collected night after night in Campbell-street Relief church, to hear the accounts brought back from the field of their labours. Not a few of the evangelical ministers of the Establishment gave the cause their countenance, and hailed it as a new and efficient mode of diffusing life in a region of spiritual death, and from which, by the laws of the church, they were excluded, as they could not intrude into the parishes of their nominal brethren. The Relief churches in Glasgow and Anderston contributed most liberally to the philanthropic plan of diffusing the gospel in the destitute parts of the Highlands.

Few missions ever started with a better prospect of doing good; but it was speedily blasted, and never afterwards regaining anything like vigour, it ultimately died. Its fate is deeply to be deplored. It was a mere blazing meteor. Mr. Douglas having left Glasgow for Dundee, was to pass through Edinburgh on his way homeward, and there also to give an account of his mission. In the metropolis sad news awaited him. He was a zealous political reformer—warmer perhaps than wise. He had, at one time, allowed himself to be nominated a delegate from Dundee to the Edinburgh convention; and had, even at one of its meetings,

\* Pp. 90, 91.

† Life and Times of John Campbell. By R. Philip, p. 285.

acted as president. He was therefore a marked man. In setting out on his mission, he had very imprudently carried a manuscript to Edinburgh, of the contents of which he said he was ignorant, and stipulated for its printing. During his absence in the Highlands, the pamphlet was seized, its author arraigned; and, “on the day of his trial, the Lord Advocate made free to say—the real author kept behind the curtain, and mentioned his suspicion that the tract must have been composed by the Rev. Mr. Douglas, mentioning his name, profession, and place of abode.”\*

Of all these things he was informed by the Rev. James Struthers when he arrived at Edinburgh. In vain did Mr. Douglas plead his innocence. The law authorities had tattooed him. The reign of terror was then raging in the metropolis. The people would not come to hear an account of his labours. Dispirited and crest-fallen, he returned to Dundee. The mission he had laboured to set up, and of which he was the mainspring, he had also dashed to the ground. He had fixed upon it, undesignedly, a political character, because he was denounced as such; and the public could not distinguish between him as a minister, and as a keen and dauntless reformer. How true is it that a minister perils his official usefulness when he steps forth as a leader in the warfare of politics!

In the year 1798, three missionaries, the Rev. Messrs. M'Naught, M'Dermid, and Buchanan, were sent forth by the synod into the same district of country. But the history of Douglas was easily made a handle of against them. In 1799, two missionaries were sent forth. The synod were anxious to carry on their benevolent designs. A great difficulty, however, was felt in getting missionaries qualified to preach in Gaelic. A lack of agents deadened public interest; and, in 1804, the synod handed over their surplus funds, £70, to the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge, to be applied to the printing of the scriptures in Gaelic, a design for which they had formerly, as a synod, collected. Thus came to an unfortunate end a scheme, which was truly Christian and catholic, and which, even in its last breath, expressed its love for the best interests of the Highland population.† Yet it ought not to have been dissolved. It was pusillanimous to give up the cause of the “cross” because a “cross” came in the way. There

\* *Strictures on the Author's Trial, &c.*, by N. Douglas, p. 71. Glasgow: 1818.

† As some curiosity may be felt to know something of the history of Mr. Douglas, it is given in the Appendix.

is still room for sowing a handful of corn on the tops of the mountains.

At the very time when the Relief synod were maturing and putting into active operation their Highland mission, Mr. Haldane and his friends seem also to have been inoculated with a desire to engage in a similar benevolent enterprise. Scarcely had the Relief missionaries started for Argyleshire, when Messrs. J. Haldane, J. Aikman, and J. Rate, left Edinburgh by the North Ferry, and commenced a preaching tour, which they continued by Perth, Aberdeen, and along the north coast of Scotland, as far as Wick and Thurso, even crossing the Pentland frith and going over to the Orkney Islands. This excursion made much noise at the time. They were laymen, and this was *lay preaching*. They were hitherto connected with the Church of Scotland, yet they went into every clergyman's parish that lay in their way, preached during the week by tuck of drum in the market-place, and on Sabbath, attended the parish-church in the forenoon, and if the discourse was Arminian, as it too frequently was, in the evening they pointed out the poisonous nature of the doctrine they had listened to, and called upon the audience, in the most decided manner, not to build their hopes of salvation upon sincere and imperfect obedience, as their pastor had taught them, but upon the atonement of Jesus. The novelty of the thing,—laymen preaching like ministers,—the earnestness of their addresses,—the soundness of their views on the plan of salvation,—secured to them immense audiences. At times they would preach to two or three thousand. The report which they brought back as to the state of religion in the towns which they had visited, was anything but favourable. They published a report of their labours, in which they brought sweeping and heavy charges against the regular clergy.\*

A society was immediately formed in Edinburgh, under the auspices of the Haldanes, for propagating the gospel at home, and funds were collected for sending out persons as itinerants and catechists, who were to employ themselves in conversing with the people, setting up Sabbath schools, and distributing tracts. Highly popular ministers, such as Messrs. Ewing, Slaterie, Burder, and Parsons were employed in preaching tours, who drew around them immense crowds. Before the close of 1799, nearly

\* The Journal of a Tour through the Northern Counties of Scotland and the Orkney Isles, in the autumn of 1797. Edin. 1798.



forty catechists were travelling throughout the length and breadth of the land, thirty or forty thousand tracts had been distributed, and the whole of the north of Scotland was thrown into a blaze. The Established clergy complained that the world was going out of its place, and the old land-marks of things, both civil and sacred, were fast disappearing.

In the year 1797, a new Sabbath school society was also originated in Edinburgh, independent of clerical superintendence, which had for its object to set up Sabbath schools in destitute localities. Connected with each teacher there was to be a committee, who were to aid him in the devotional exercises, and one of them in rotation was to deliver a short address to the children, parents, and any poor destitute persons that could be induced to attend. It was just a modification of the system of lay preaching, and was intended at little expense, as no salaries were to be given, to diffuse the gospel, and make private Christians useful to each other. All around Edinburgh the plan met with much public favour, and was soon introduced into the principal towns in Scotland.

The active mind of Robert Haldane resolved to push his plans with still more energy, and he had the means at command for making the attempt. He set up academies in Glasgow, Dundee, and Edinburgh, under Messrs. Ewing, Innes, and Haldane, "to educate in a plain way, a number of converted and zealous young men,"\* without altering their state in society. They were to be sent forth to fill the office of the ministry, if they should be found from experience to have the necessary gifts. Before they were admitted, "They solemnly declared, that they considered it their duty, while they continued to preach the gospel, to work with their own hands, if necessary, for their support."† The plan appeared very beautiful on paper, and if a royal road to learning could have been found, it would have prospered. Twenty were to be sent out every year. Amongst the three hundred sent forth from these classes before they were altogether given up, there were some choice spirits, who having got a start in learning, pushed on their private studies with vigour, and obtained success; but in too many instances the light which they received merely enabled them to see their own intellectual darkness.

\* Haldane's Answer to Greville Ewing, p. 35.

† P. 68.

Such a novel state of things could not spring up in Edinburgh, and diffuse itself from thence over the whole country, without producing much discussion, and calling forth from various quarters strong opposition. It broke down the brazen walls of separation between various denominations, and placed Scotland under the influence of a new spiritual agency. The "missionaries," as they were called, were to be found preaching in every village and Highland glen, and in every locality they had their schools and their lay agency; which trenched on Presbyterian order and clerical superintendence. Church courts, both Dissenting and Established, took the alarm, and brought their antagonist power and influence to bear upon them. The Antiburgher synod, in 1796, passed a resolution against the constitution of missionary societies composed of ministers and laymen, and testified against co-operating with persons in religious matters, while, as a church, they were testifying against their opinions.

Some of the members of the M'Millan church in Glasgow having attended a missionary sermon, preached by Dr. Balfour, on behalf of the Glasgow Missionary Society, formed upon a catholic basis, the Presbytery pronounced their conduct "sinful and offensive." The session was instructed "to deal with them, and to endeavour to bring them to a sense of the *sinfulness* and *offensiveness* thereof, and to *censure* them accordingly.\* As they refused to submit to such a tyrannical and sectarian sentence, the process terminated in their expulsion from the denomination.†

The General Assembly, feeling itself particularly exposed to the inroads of the agents of Haldane, in the year 1799 passed two enactments, one against "vagrant teachers," and another against unauthorized "teachers of (Sabbath) schools;" and accompanied both with a pastoral letter, warning the inhabitants of Scotland against giving any countenance "to missionaries from what they call the Society for Propagating the Gospel at Home." They designate them as being "notoriously disaffected to the civil constitution of the country,"—as "connecting their schools with secret societies,"—as being "opposed to the Ecclesiastical

\* An Adherence to the Missionary Society Defended, pp. 45, 69.

† To this process the Relief were mainly indebted for the acquisition of the Rev. Mr. Auld, of Greenock, who has been such an honour to the body, and such a blessing to the church.

Establishment of the land,"—ignorant,—unable to preach, and yet taking upon themselves to intrude into the parish of regular ministers, censure their doctrine, assail their character, and alienate from them the affections of their people. Copies of their pastoral letter were sent to the sheriff of every county, and the chief magistrate of every borough. The procurator of the church was authorized to proceed legally against unauthorized teachers of schools, on some old acts of the Scottish parliament directed against papists and malignants.

The design of these enactments lay upon their surface, and no one could mistake their tendency. They were calculated to bring the missionaries under the notice of those civil functionaries who had already tried, judged, and banished Muir and Skirving for sedition, to Botany Bay, because they had been connected with "secret societies." It was no wonder, therefore, that the Rev. Mr. Burder, in his answer to this pastoral admonition, published at the time in the newspapers, should say, "I was much surprised and grieved to find that, in Scotland, a country so long and so justly famed for religion, attempts to instruct the ignorant, and reclaim the vicious, should be violently opposed,—and opposed by means so artful, so dishonourable, and unjust. I mean by the charge of *sedition* brought against men, the purity of whose principles and views will bear, I am convinced, the strictest investigation. The charges are serious indeed,—they may affect not only the character and usefulness, but possibly the lives of the persons accused; but where is the proof of all these charges, or any part of them? Upon what evidence are they grounded? Tell it not in Gath, publish it not among the hosts of the infidels, that a venerable body of priests have uttered these terrific charges *without one single fact* to substantiate them!" In the spirit of such ecclesiastical enactments, Messrs. Haldane and Campbell were served with summons as vagrant teachers when they were in Kintyre, and one of the missionaries was even seized in Cowal, and, by a justice-of-the-peace, put on board His Majesty's ship, the "*Tender*;" but legal measures soon vindicated the law of toleration, and the offending parties were fain to withdraw their case, and pay all expenses, and a handsome *solatium*.

The Church of Scotland had imitators who were walking closely in her footsteps, and even, as to time, going before her, from whom very different things might have been expected. The Relief synod, with all their professions of liber-

ality, and their early attachment to missions, partook of the illiberal and sectarian spirit which was now become fashionable in high places, and enacted a very sectarian law which cannot be defended, and which, in 1811, was allowed, as something they were ashamed of, to drop out of the code of their regulations. In the year 1798, they unanimously decreed, "That no minister belonging to this body shall give, or allow his pulpit to be given, to any person who has not attended a regular course of philosophy and divinity in some of the universities of the nation; and who has not been regularly licensed to preach the gospel." This was sufficiently mighty. They were forgetting the rock from whence they themselves were hewn. On Gillespie, their own founder, who had finished his theological education at the academy of Doddridge, they were pouring contempt! And were the English Dissenters, henceforward, to be excluded from their pulpits? So the matter was determined. Public bodies as well as individuals, often err from legislating under the influence of temper, and to guard against a temporary evil.

The "missionaries," though at first hemmed in, crippled, and watched on every side by other denominations, would have risen above all persecution, and have got quit of many of their practices, offensive to other parties, had they not quarrelled among themselves, and rashly made an appeal to the censorious public, which, in such cases, always delights to condemn both parties.

It is impossible to look at the extent and expensive nature of the apparatus which was set up, without perceiving that Mr. Haldane had involved himself in obligations which he would soon be unable to meet. "I felt," says he, "the calls on me from different quarters increasing very fast."\* This led him to take measures to diminish the expense of the seminary, by offering Mr. Ewing £100 annually instead of £200; to be more sparing in the sums given from the home mission fund; and to suggest that the Glasgow congregation should relieve him of the purchase-money of the circus "at £1,000 less than it cost him."† Mr. Ewing, who was officiating in Lady Glenorchy's chapel at the time when he entered into an agreement with Mr. Haldane, naturally expected that he would not only have a stipend secured to him out of the proceeds of the Glasgow tabernacle, but that the house would be devoted to the public worship of God with-

\* Narrative, p. 30.

† Narrative, p. 7.



out any expense to the congregation, as was the case with the one he had left. When he discovered that Mr. Haldane still claimed it as private property, and that he had the control in many things, as he held the title-deeds, jealousies, and bickerings, and disputes, naturally followed.

Besides, the system of tuition and itinerancies did not, upon trial, come up to expectation. Attending a few weeks during two or three years, on the tutors, was merely an apology for education. Not a few of the young men were intoxicated with vanity, when they found themselves so speedily raised from the workshop to the tables of the first people of Glasgow or Edinburgh, who vied in showing them countenance. As they began their labours upon the shoulders of such men as Haldane, Ewing, and Innes, their popularity at starting was great—such as no young preachers could sustain. “At first, when the preachers were sent out, crowds of hearers generally attended and contributed to their support, but when churches began to be formed, their numbers, except perhaps in a few large towns, greatly declined.”\* Their preaching was not such as to draw crowds after them, and unless they had been inspired, considering how they were educated, it could not have been otherwise.

Disappointment in this quarter led to still greater discrepancies of opinion between the leading members of the body. Mr. Ewing, who was one of the best scholars and most accomplished ministers of the age, wished, along with Aikman, Orme, &c., a more thorough system of education introduced, and that things should be conducted more after the system of the English Independents, by well-educated ordained ministers, and that the exhortation of the brethren, or what might be called lay preaching, should in a great measure be confined to week-day meetings of the church, or to village preaching. The Messrs. Haldanes, Jackson, &c., considered this going back to Rome, and that the whole system of classes should be dispensed with, and that teaching elders, according to the system of Glas, should be chosen by the church from amongst themselves. The breach was now widening.

When J. A. Haldane published ‘Reasons of a Change of Sentiment, and Practice on the Subject of Baptism,’ the separation was completed. This great change, which rent the body in twain, was but one cause of many, though it was the important one.

\* Narrative, p. 66.

“I was obtaining more consistent views of the nature of the kingdom of Christ, which tended to undermine my principles on baptism. I am fully persuaded that if I had formerly held the same principles on other subjects which I did some years before I renounced infant baptism, I never would have adopted it.”\*

In the end of 1808 and beginning of 1809, the connection between the Messrs. Haldanes and their friends, and Messrs. Ewing, Orme, &c., and their friends, was sundered. The former even insisted that the latter should cease to occupy places of worship in Glasgow and Perth which belonged to them, “as they were now of opposite sentiments”† from those that preached in them.

Though too many, no doubt, chuckled over this rupture, which in a great measure laid in ruins one of the noblest schemes which modern times have witnessed for diffusing religion, and evangelizing the population of the country;‡ yet the good and the liberal of all parties who rejoiced in the spread of religion, grieved over it, and could have wished it had been obviated. It long continued to draw from their bosoms the sigh of regret. It happily issued, indeed, in the portion who adhered to Independency, forming themselves into “a Congregational union” for mutual counsel and advice, which has been of most essential service in maintaining the cause of the gospel in Scotland, but they have never gained the popular acclamation in their favour which they once had. By their instrumentality a generous spirit for the support of missions and religious ordinances has been signally promoted, and great peace and harmony have henceforth prevailed among them. The outburst of zeal and missionary effort after the French revolution has now sunk down, amid all parties, to a clear, beautiful, perennial, and refreshing stream, and numerous missions are conducted with regularity and comfort.

\* Reasons of a Change, &c., p. 6. Second Edition. Edin. 1809.

† Facts and Documents. Orme's Letter, p. 202.

‡ In a Memoir of Mr. R. Haldane, in the Evangelical Magazine, Feb., 1843, it is stated,—“In a publication of Mr. Haldane's, issued at the period of the changes alluded to, he calculated that his expenditure on chapels alone, then exceeded £31,000, while it is certain, that on general objects he spent almost as much as upon chapels, even without including the education of nearly three hundred preachers.” During the period of their education, he allowed them about £35 each, annually.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

STATE OF DISSENT AT THE BEGINNING OF THE PRESENT CENTURY  
—BIBLE SOCIETY—OLD AND NEW LIGHT PROCESS—DEATH OF  
HUTCHISON, BELL, PINKERTON, DUN, STRUTHERS.

AT the beginning of the nineteenth century Dissenters were become both numerous and powerful. In every town of any importance they had erected churches. Their principles of civil and religious liberty were everywhere hailed with delight; and their ministers being well educated, and respectable men, they arrested public attention, and were highly esteemed. In the rising commercial prosperity of the country, when the cotton trade was yielding such ample remunerating prices both to masters and workmen, it was felt to be an insignificant burden to erect a meeting-house, and call and support a pastor of their own choice. In the year 1799, Dr. Ranken, of Glasgow, published an Essay on 'The Importance of Religious Establishments,' with the view of inducing the various classes of Presbyterian Dissenters to return to the Church of Scotland; and, that he might know the strength of the parties he was addressing, he procured statistics on this point from themselves. According to the returns with which he was favoured, the Dissenters, at that period, amounted to 154,000; the Reformed Presbytery 4,000, Antiburgher Synod 55,000, Burgher Synod 55,000, Relief Synod 36,000, Methodists, Independents, Baptists, &c., 4,000. The Relief consisted of sixty congregations, the average of which is reckoned at 600 persons. Compared with the gross population of the country, which Sir John Sinclair, in 1795, estimated at 1,526,492, the Dissenters formed a considerable proportion of the population. And this proportion is increased when it is borne in mind that the congregations seem to have been calculated according to the number of wor-

shippers, without taking into account the children of Dissenting families.\*

The influence of Dissenters in carrying on the religious and charitable institutions of the country was now strongly felt, as they had begun to lay aside their antipathies, and co-operate in general measures for the good of the community. When the London Bible Society was formed, in 1804, for the circulation of the scriptures without note or comment, the leading men in the Church of Scotland, like the dignitaries of the Church of England, viewed it with great coldness, as partaking of French republicanism; but the Dissenters in Scotland universally hailed it with joy, and gave it countenance and support. The portion of the Scottish Establishment which first gave it prompt and generous support was the synod of Glasgow and Ayr. The eight parish-churches in Glasgow, in the year 1805, collected in its behoof £640. The Relief synod, in 1808, unanimously appointed a collection to be made in all its churches. Messrs. Haldane and their friends were ready here as they were for every good work. The Secession also contributed largely to its funds; and this, on their part, was the more honourable, as both sections were, at the time, sadly perplexed with the disputes which had sprung up among themselves, in regard to the binding obligation of the covenants upon posterity, and the power of the civil magistrate in religious matters.

A small party in each synod contended for these antiquated dogmas, as if they had been doctrines essential to salvation. And what is very remarkable, the three persons who contended for these tenets, and would not make them matters of forbearance, had once themselves been deeply tinctured with them. It might have been expected that their own conscientious scruples, in their younger years, should have made them tolerant and forbearing; but with them it was the reverse.

Messrs. Bruce and M'Crie, who were the main agents in producing the separation in the Antiburgher synod, in 1806, had, in early life, been the strenuous abettors of liberal and spiritual views as to the kingdom of Christ. The fact, as to M'Crie, has already been noticed. And Bruce had boggled so much at the power given to the civil magistrate in the covenants, that he had delayed for a time to take license, and "had both conversed and

\* Essay, p. 124.



corresponded with Gillespie, who had avowed a scheme of greater latitude and liberty"\* than his own friends, and he was even at one time on the very point of being received into communion with the Relief church. When it came to the last step of publicly giving in his adhesion to Relief principles and renouncing the Covenants, he got over his scruples, and remained in connection with the Antiburghers.

Mr. Taylor of Levenside, afterwards of Perth, who led the debate which split the Burghers, in 1799, on nearly the same points which divided the Antiburghers, had at one time also been a flaming advocate for the separation of church and state. In opposition to the Relief, who professed to hold communion with visible saints belonging to the Establishment, he said vauntingly, "By a distinct Secession, all the inconveniences of a partial separation are avoided. The constitution of the kingdom of Jesus Christ is maintained in its due vigour. The native glory and purity of the church are best manifested. The clogs and fetters of a civil Establishment are knocked off. The temptations to which the church is thereby exposed are prevented. The laws of the Mediator's kingdom operate each in its own place, and all by their own force and authority. The daughter of Zion, no longer prostituted to the impure embraces of the kings of the earth, appears fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners."†

When the Old Light Burghers seceded from their former brethren, and formed themselves into a distinct party, all the unpleasant consequences of a disruption in a Christian denomination instantly followed. They were indeed but a handful compared to their New Light brethren, but passion, on both sides, was running high. The seat of war was therefore instantly transferred from the ecclesiastical into the civil courts. A long legal and expensive process was commenced with the view of ascertaining the party to whom the property belonged in those congregations where there was a division.

The law of Scotland was then more loose about church property than what, by "later decisions," it has since become. Prior to this process, it had been the usual practice of the Court of Ses-

\* 'A Review of the Proceedings of the General Associate Synod.' By A. Bruce, p. 140.

† 'Liberty without Licentiousness,' p. 55. Paisley: 1792. This pamphlet is anonymous, but is always understood to have been written by Mr. Taylor.

sion to consider dissenting churches somewhat like a mercantile company holding jointly an indivisible property. A vote of the majority, therefore, decided the matter. If a dispute about a church took place, they investigated which party had the majority of trustees and original subscribers, and also which adhered to the church courts, and decided accordingly. But these principles failed them in their application to the present dispute. Both parties maintained that they were the Secession. The Old Lights\* pled that they adhered to the original constitutional principles; and that it was unjust to strip them of their property merely because they would not change those principles which, at their ordination, they had vowed to maintain. The New Lights, on the contrary, held that they were the Secession, and that this was evident from the overwhelming majority of votes in the synod, which was constitutionally empowered to regulate and determine all the affairs of the Secession church,—that it was essential to the very existence of a church that it should improve its formula with increasing light,—that the Secession church had done so repeatedly since its commencement, and that the churches in connection with the synod must necessarily continue in connection with that body whom the majority of the synod declares to be the synod.

The title-deeds of several of the churches, of which number was Old Kilpatrick, were found not to be very specific in connecting them with the Secession church courts; and such cases were decided on the principle of the majority of the subscribers determining the destination of the church, because it was property which could not be divided.

The church at Perth became the turning point of all the other processes, as to churches connected by their constitution with the synod; and, eventually, it evolved a new principle altogether as to church property, which, to Dissenting churches, is of the very last moment, and with which (as the law in *practice*, for there is no law in statute) all should be familiar.

The process about the Burgher Secession church in Perth began in 1800, and was not terminated for twenty years. What a period of litigation! It so happened that, in this Burgher Secession church, there were two ministers. They took different sides. The people also divided into two sections, the greater proportion cleaving to Mr. Jarvie, the senior minister, who de-

\* The designation *Old and New Lights*, is not used in the way of reproach, but for the sake of distinctness.

clared for Old Light opinions ; and a smaller section adhering to Aikman who approved of New Light principles. Both parties claimed the church. The Old Light party had a great majority of the original subscribers, or, their heirs ; and, as they were adhering, as they said, to the original principles of the Secession, for maintaining of which, the property was acquired, they claimed it as theirs, and maintained that the other party, by a change of principles, had forfeited all right to it.

On the other hand, the New Light party claimed the church as being, by its *title deeds*, the property of “an Associate congregation of Burgher Seceders, in communion with, and under the inspection and jurisdiction, of the Associate presbytery and synod.” The other party, they maintained, having withdrawn from all connection with their church courts, had lost all right or interest in the property.\*

Considering the indefinite nature of the law about Dissenting places of worship, which was a new species of property not known in feudal times, the Court of Session was greatly perplexed with the matter, and felt themselves at a great loss to thread their way out of the labyrinth of legal and clerical pleadings, which threatened to involve them in the depths of church courts and Secession disputes. In the first instance, they applied their old principle of a majority of the subscribers, and adjudged the property to those who had “a majority in point of interest.” This would have given it to the Old Light party. But this decision was brought under review, on the ground that the church was, and must be, connected with the Associate synod, and that the great majority of synod approved of the change, and the church, as an appendage, must go along with them. This led to a change in their Lordships’ interlocutor ; and now, the church was declared to belong to a society of persons who had contributed their money for accommodating a congregation “in communion with, and subject to the discipline of the synod of the Burgher Seceders.” This was giving it to the New Light party.

In this state it went by appeal to the House of Lords ; and Lord Eldon, in 1813, remitted it back to the Court of Session, with instructions, “That the court should examine what were the religious opinions of the Seceders when the society was formed, not for the purpose of stating which of them contained

\* ‘The Case as it is,’ pp. 16, 17. Edin. 1821. This Case is best known among lawyers under the title of *Craigdallie versus Aikman*.



more, and which of them contained less of sound doctrine, *but as a mere matter of fact*, in order to get at the intent and purpose with which the property was purchased, and the building erected." "I do apprehend," said his Lordship, "there is no case that we have had (in the English law) that would authorize me to say, that if persons had subscribed to the building of a meeting-house for religious worship, and if these persons afterward disagreed in opinion, you would compel the execution of the trust for the purpose of carrying on the religious worship of those who had changed their opinion, instead of executing that trust for the benefit of those who had adhered to their religious opinions. I know of no case which has gone to that length." \* This was bringing out a new principle as applicable to church cases,—connecting property with opinions, and neither with majorities nor church courts.

This decision was hailed with rapture by the Old Light party, as they were perfectly sure that they would show that they were the same as the original Seceders, whereas the New Light synod were glaring innovators. Both parties now set themselves to expound their views. It became incumbent on the New Light party to show, that if there was not a perfect identity, there was at least no material alteration in their new enactment, from "the testimonies" of the founders of the denomination. All that talent and acumen could do, was done. Every scrap of paper, and original document connected with the history of the Secession, and the nature of the disruption which had taken place, were ransacked and sifted, and laid before their Lordships. This was a novel study for men of law. Grave matters of error in the eye of the clergy usually appear to them mere unmeaning distinctions, and are generally passed by with contempt by all civil functionaries.

To understand the matter thoroughly, it is necessary to observe, that "the only questions which then agitated the judicatories of Burgher Seceders were, first, as to the extent of the power assigned to the civil magistrate in the Confession of Faith, as recognised in 1648, to suppress blasphemies and heresies, to prevent corruptions and abuses in worship, when taken in connection with the words of the Solemn League and Covenant, by which, for these purposes, it was declared to be lawful for him to have recourse to the sword; and, secondly, Whether the obligations imposed by the Solemn League and Covenant were the same upon

\* 'Case as it is,' p. 26.



the present generation as upon their fathers who swore them, These being the only two questions in agitation, the synod resolved, 1st, That they disapproved of all doctrines which are understood 'as favouring persecution for conscience' sake, and ascribing an exorbitant power of religious interference to the civil magistrate ;' and, with respect to the other question, they declared, that while the synod 'hold the obligations of our covenant upon posterity, they do not interfere with the controversy with respect to the nature and kind of it, and recommend to all their brethren to suppress that controversy as tending to engender strife rather than godly edifying.' These were the only matters determined on by the synod." \*

Both parties in their defences repudiated compulsion or persecution by the magistrate, for the sake of conscience. Both approved of the obligation of the covenants, though they might differ in explaining the mode. It also appeared from their pleadings, that the Old Lights, during the dispute in the church courts, while they had been opposed to the first form in which the new limitation was proposed, had, nevertheless, themselves proposed something substantially the same with the enactment which was ultimately carried.

Their Lordships could not discover any material difference between the parties on which to found a decision, for the power of the magistrate had always, in some way or other, been qualified in the Secession church, and therefore, on the 18th of Feb., 1818, they decreed that the Old Light party had failed to condescend on "any acts done, or opinions professed" by the other party, "from which this court, *as far as they are capable of understanding the subject*, can infer, much less find, that the said defenders have deviated from the principles and standards of the Associate presbytery and synod: farther, find, that the pursuers have failed in rendering *intelligible* to the court on what grounds it is that they aver, that there does at this moment exist *any real difference between their principles and those of the defenders* ;— and that the pursuers must be considered merely as so many individuals, who have thought proper voluntarily to separate from the congregation to which they belonged, without any assignable cause, and without any fault on the part of the defenders, and therefore have no right to disturb the defenders in the possession

\* Speech of Lord Medowbank, in the case of Smith against Galbraith. His Lordship, when at the bar, was counsel for the New Light Burgher Seceders.

of the place of worship originally built for the profession of principles, from which the pursuers have not shown that the defenders have deviated.”\*

This decision was afterwards confirmed by Lord Eldon in the House of Lords; and in giving his judgment, he gave expression to the following keen cutting remarks:—“I think I should not offend your Lordships, if I were farther to say, that the Court of Session in Scotland, knowing what the principles and standards of the Associate presbytery and synod were, fully as well, if not better, than your Lordships, would be fully as able to decide, whether any ‘acts done, or opinions professed by the defenders, Jedidiah Aikman and others,’ were opinions, or facts, which were a deviation on the part of the defenders from the principles and standards of the Associate presbytery and synod: and if they were obliged to qualify this finding in the way they do, intimating that they doubt whether they understand the subject at all, under the words, ‘as far as they are capable of understanding the subject,’ I hope I may be permitted, without offence to your Lordships, to say, that there may be some doubt whether we understood the subject, not only because the Court of Session was much more likely to understand the matter than we are, but because I have had the mortification, I know not how many times over, to endeavour myself to understand what these principles were, and whether they have, or have not, deviated from them; and I have made the attempt to understand it, till I find it, at least on my part, to be quite hopeless.”\*

Thus terminated this long, expensive, and important process. It was most disastrous to the Old Light party, while it placed the New Light party on a far more liberal and secure basis than ever they had before occupied. They were now even legally brought more into accordance with the tolerant sentiments of the age. The compulsory principles of the national covenant which they had specifically abandoned, were repeatedly declared from the bench to be persecuting, and even contrary to the law of the land. This was a sad blow to their opponents, and particularly to Mr. Taylor, who had, in 1803, republished Brown’s pamphlet, on ‘The Absurdity and Perfidy of Authoritative Toleration,’ prefixing to it a commendatory preface. Though they could not make it intelligible wherein they differed from their

\* ‘Case as it is,’ pp. 46, 47.

† Ibid., p. 47.

New Light brethren, there is no doubt much truth in the remark, that the latter party, "in their struggle to obtain *relief*, had obtained Relief principles, and that there was now no difference between them, excepting the communion of saints, which is even not unknown in some of their congregations."\* The decision of the case proved the precursor, in the first instance, of union with the New Light Antiburghers, and may yet prove the precursor of other unions equally desirable.

The division in the Antiburgher synod in 1806, into Old and New Light Antiburghers, on the same points which split the Burghers, also led to legal proceedings as to their churches, and particularly as to Dr. M'Crie's. They pled not only a change of principle on the part of the synod, but they also took other and very dangerous ground to the liberty and independence of the church of Christ. As they had been cut off very summarily, without summons, or libel, or trial of any kind, on information given by report at the bar of the synod, that they had formed themselves into a presbytery,† they argued before the civil courts that they should have been libelled according to the form of process, that the sentence of the synod on this account was inept, and could not take effect nor strip them of their churches. Had this plea been pushed and recognised, it would have subjected every Dissenting church court to the Court of Session. It would always have been easy to find that some point of form had been overlooked. After the cause had been entered upon the record, and a few steps had been taken, the parties arranged the matter among themselves, and the Antiburgher synod escaped the vexation of a civil process, and yet ultimately reaped all the advantages of that of Perth. One fights, and another shares the spoil.

While the Seceders were thus shattered and crippled by divisions, the Relief denomination was unscathed. It had always made things of minor importance a matter of forbearance. In the close of the eighteenth century, and beginning of the nineteenth, it had a very favourable opportunity for multiplying its churches. The opportunity was not left altogether unimproved. The presbytery of Dumfries was erected in the year 1797, and several churches throughout the country were organized about

\* Remarks on the Question, whether there has been a Change of Principle in the New Light synod. Glasgow: 1815. P. 36.

† Review, p. 177.



the same period. There is often, however, a kind of compensating arrangement in Providence which brings religious parties very much to a level.

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Relief synod was stripped of a great number of its most eminent men, and not a few of them were in the prime of life, and in the very zenith of their popularity. The Rev. Messrs. Hutchison, Paisley; Bell, Glasgow; Pinkerton, Campbelton; Dun, Glasgow; and Struthers, Edinburgh, followed each other in quick succession to the tomb. It was impossible, in a small body, to supply the places of all of them with men as gifted, and exercising as much influence, by their character and public ministrations.

Mr. Hutchison died on the 10th of January, 1802. His history has already been given. He was much and justly regretted by the friends of evangelical truth, and of civil and religious liberty among all denominations. He was endowed with great vigour of mind, and warmth of heart. His preaching was masculine, eloquent, impressive. He loved the gospel for its own sake, and set its great truths in a very clear and engaging manner before his people. Being deeply imbued with the scriptural and spiritual nature of the Messiah's kingdom, he scrupled not to contend for the Saviour's crown, and to show the absurdity of taking the kings of this world into co-ordinate power with Christ, at a time when many of the sincere friends of religion considered him little better than a heathen for doing so. He rejoiced in the diffusion of liberty, hailed the rise of missionary societies, and would rather have gone to the block than have given his countenance to tyrannical measures in church or state. To Mr. Hutchison, more than to any other author of the last century, the religious public of Scotland is indebted for correct and scriptural views of the constitution of the church of Christ.

The Rev. Thomas Bell, Dovehill, Glasgow—of whom there have been given many notices—soon followed him into the heavenly kingdom. He died on the 15th October, 1802. Mr. Bell's mind was somewhat differently constituted from Mr. Hutchison's. It was not so vigorous, but it was better cultivated; and his attainments, both as a Hebrew and German scholar, when these languages were little attended to, gave him a great advantage over most of the theologians of the day. He had an uncommonly sedate and serious manner in the pulpit. His style



was idiomatic and pointed. He was a thorough master of all the turning points in theology, and trained up a congregation remarkably well instructed in the saving truths of Christianity. He was, as has been shown, a dissenter from principle. Both from the pulpit and press, he strenuously advocated the duty of covenanting. His brethren made this, as they did many other things of secondary import, a matter of forbearance, and thus the peace of the church was preserved, while unrestrained liberty was by him enjoyed. During his life he was an ornament to his profession; and after his death, his memory was embalmed in the recollection of the pious citizens of Glasgow.

Two years thereafter, 1804, Mr. Pinkerton died as he was returning from the meeting of synod. He took suddenly unwell on board the *packet* at sea, and was with difficulty carried to his own house, where he expired. Mr. Pinkerton was a native of Glasgow. His frank manners, gentlemanly bearing, and sterling good sense, qualified him, in no ordinary degree, to organize and superintend the numerous and respectable congregation of Campbellton, and to gain favour from all classes of the community. The landed proprietors and the Established clergy regarded him at first as an intruder, and were disposed, from their early prejudices and assumed superiority, to frown upon him and his congregation of dissenters; but he smoothed down their asperities, gained their esteem, and died the father and friend of his people.

The Rev. Mr. James Dun, of Campbell-street, preached his funeral sermon. He went thither for the double purpose of showing respect to the memory of a highly revered minister, and of trying what a change of air might do to recruit his own sinking constitution. Alas! he also followed his friend on the 2d of January, 1805, and left another sad blank in the smitten denomination. He died in the 54th year of his age, and 25th of his ministry, when the church was looking forward to the enjoyment of the services of his matured manhood.

In his younger years, Mr. Dun, along with his father's family, removed from Dunblane to Kilsyth. It is seldom that a congregation think of calling a person as their pastor, who has been brought up among themselves,—as it is extremely difficult for any one to pass from the activities of life into the official duties of the sanctuary, and at the same time to make his youthful companions lose the man in the minister. It was Mr. Dun's associates, however, that strove most eagerly to have him as their pastor.

His talents commanded their respect; his blameless life won their esteem; and the sweetness of his temper made them wish him as their spiritual counsellor. A vacancy occurring in the Relief church about the time he got license, he was cordially invited to take the spiritual oversight of the congregation. He was ordained at Kilsyth on the 9th August, 1780, and continued to labour amongst them with increasing acceptability and usefulness till 6th September, 1792, when he was translated to Campbell-street, Glasgow, which was then a forming congregation. It required an eminent person to take the oversight thereof.

His modesty prevented him from ever publishing anything save a synodical sermon on "the qualifications of a minister;" and its excellent maxims, chaste language, and progressive unity of thought, flowing on like a clear, copious river, make its readers wish that the head that conceived, and the pen which wrote it, had been more prolific.

The charm of Mr. Dun's preaching, which is still spoken of with delight, lay in its *unction*. In him, more than in any other Relief minister, there was a happy union of solemnity and affection. His lips kept knowledge, and his people hung upon them, and were edified by his impressive ministrations.

He was a close student of prophecy, and as some of its predictions were receiving fulfilment at the era of the French revolution, when he first came to Glasgow, he, by his discourses on prophecy, drew around him immense crowds of admiring auditors, who were gratified with his lucid and judicious expositions of the more difficult portions of the word of God.

His benevolent heart rejoiced over the brightening prospects which were beginning to dawn upon the world in the nascent religious institutions which were springing into existence. He saw Missionary and Bible societies merely in promise, but he could rejoice in the happy fruit which they were yet to yield. The wheel, however, was broken at the cistern, and in the strength of manhood he sunk down in the midst of his usefulness, surrounded by a numerous and affectionate congregation. This was stroke upon stroke, and still that God who afflicts not willingly the sons of men, had another stroke to inflict upon the Relief denomination, and to leave them in a great measure bared and peeled.

On the 13th July, 1807, the Rev. James Struthers, College-street, Edinburgh, died in the thirty-seventh year of his age.

“ Judgment seemed begun at the house of God.” He was in many respects the most distinguished minister at the time in Scotland; and when all eyes were turned towards him, he sickened and died. Lord, what is man!—a fading flower—a passing shadow.

This distinguished preacher was the eldest son of Robert Struthers, Hags, parish of Glasford, Lanarkshire; and before his license, was connected with the Relief church, Strathaven. When ordained as the successor of Mr. Baine, he had not completed his twenty-first year. A sketch of his life and character was drawn by an intimate friend, and published in an Edinburgh Monthly Magazine, October, 1810. As the magazine is rarely to be met with, and was published in the very place where he laboured, and where he was intimately known, a few selections may be made from its correct and graphic delineation of his attainments and character.

“ From the very commencement of his splendid career, he discovered uncommon talents for public speaking. This was not the effect of study. Indeed a good judge could not fail to remark, that his manner of delivery did not proceed from rules, or the lessons he had received from a teacher, but were altogether of that inartificial cast which discovered a natural taste for oratory. He enjoyed every advantage that could be derived from a graceful and commanding figure; his voice was exceedingly powerful, and yet he had so great management of it, that no man could be more pathetic when he chose, or considered it necessary to be so. It was currently reported by those who were envious of his fame, that he had derived great benefit from the instructions of the late Mr. Woods the player. Had he actually done so, instead of blame he deserved commendation; but, upon the highest authority, (that of Mr. Struthers himself, and no man had a higher sense of honour, or talked more modestly of his own attainments,) the writer of this article can affirm that he never received any instructions whatever from any teacher of elocution.

“ His person was above the ordinary size, rather slender made, but of a very genteel appearance. His very dress was indicative of his character; and I know of no expression by which I can make myself so well understood by those who never had an opportunity of seeing him, than by using a Latin expression,—he was ‘*Simplex munditiis*.’ He had a perfect abhorrence at every

kind of affectation; but yet there was something peculiar in his taste, which discovered the character of his mind.

“ His style of preaching was exceedingly calculated to second his manner of delivery. His mind never seems to have had the least tendency to enthusiasm; and he never even attempted to insist upon those hackneyed topics to which long prescription has given in this country so great popularity. Whatever he said was plain and obvious. He avoided everything which was pendent, or not level to the capacities of the plainest understanding. He never dealt in mysteries; and though the strain of his preaching was what is technically called Calvinistic, he seldom discussed the peculiarities of that system.”

His church requiring to be rebuilt, “ he determined, if possible, to keep his flock together, and to continue his public labours as usual until the new church should be finished. He had recourse to an expedient very novel in this country, and which, considering the strength of vulgar prejudice, would scarcely have been hazarded by one of a less enterprising temper. In short, he determined to hire the circus, and assemble his congregation there on Sundays, notwithstanding that it was open for public amusements during the rest of the week. He had laboured assiduously for about seven years, but, when compared with what he was afterwards, he was little known. The novelty of using as a church a place which at that time was employed as a theatre, became a very general subject of conversation in Edinburgh, and many were induced to go from a principle of curiosity merely to hear him. In the course of a very short time many strangers resorted to the circus, and the appearance of the congregation sustained a considerable change. Some of the best judges of oratory in the city were induced to go and prove the truth of the reports concerning Mr. S.’s talents as a public speaker, and were not disappointed. The presence of these persons furnished him with a powerful stimulus to exert himself, and from this time his improvement in public speaking was apparent to all. There can be no doubt that he laid the foundation of his fame in the circus. He himself was decidedly of opinion that it was the circus which rendered him more acceptable to, and attended by a different audience. It must not, however, be supposed that his former friends deserted him; they felt a great interest in the increasing reputation of their minister, as well as a commendable pride, when they observed that the opinion which they themselves had



formed long before, received the approbation of the most competent judges.

“ His sermons, generally speaking, were composed with great care. He frequently retouched what he had written, retrenched what he considered redundant, but more frequently added a striking illustration which he thought apposite, or more particularly applicable to the occasion on which he delivered the discourse. A great many of his sermons, in his latter years especially, were little else than skeletons; under each head, sufficient space was generally left to insert any observations he might at any future period think proper. He was never ashamed to make use of an old sermon, when, from his numerous avocations, he was prevented from composing a new one. He did not, however, slavishly repeat what he had written some years before, but, on the contrary, always improved upon it; and his hearers had no reason to regret his choice. The general style of his sermons was uniform from the beginning. He was, however, in his latter years, more studious of unity than he had been formerly. They were, for the most part, composed in great haste; but when he had to preach upon any extraordinary occasion, he roused his energies, and took much greater pains upon what he meant to deliver. His language was like himself, simple and unaffected. Every discourse he delivered contained striking thoughts, ingenious illustrations, and brilliant passages. Those which were preached upon general fast-days were, after a particular manner, distinguished for these qualities, and attracted a numerous and polished audience. His sermons in behalf of the different charities in Edinburgh were also possessed of superior merit; but, when accompanied with the magic of his voice and delivery, were exquisite in their kind. From practice he could, in a very short time, make himself master of what he had proposed. His confidence, or rather his self-possession in the pulpit, was perhaps never exceeded. This was, however, a very different thing in him from that impudence by which the most ignorant haranguers are most frequently distinguished. No man felt more acutely than Mr. S. when he went to the pulpit not so well prepared as usual, and observed those present whom he knew to be good judges. This, however, never daunted him, but operated as an additional stimulus for greater exertion. Though he made no use of notes in the pulpit, he always put them in the Bible, that he might have recourse to them if necessary.

“He was an uncommonly good reader. In giving out the hymn, there was nothing affected nor monotonous. His ear for music was but imperfect; he nevertheless enjoyed in a high degree both vocal and instrumental music, when well performed. I think it may be proved, that (if I may so express myself) an excellent ear for music, and an ear for good speaking, are different faculties, or rather different modifications of the same faculty. One thing is certain, that they are seldom or never conjoined. His attitude in prayer was exceedingly devotional and impressive; the language very appropriate, and the sentiments strictly precatory. But the most remarkable feature in his character was, that, possessed of all these rare endowments, popular with the multitude, courted by the affluent, esteemed by men of talents, his public labours sanctioned by their approbation, the idol of a great number of respectable persons, and, in short, at the very head of his profession, he had the moderation and good sense never to appear to be elated, nor to assume airs, by which many, with less pretensions and fewer temptations, have rendered themselves so disgusting.

“When he had arrived at an eminence which is the lot of few, and enjoyed an extraordinary degree of prosperity, his friends perceived with regret that his appetite, at no time good, began to decline. He himself appeared to be quite sensible of what was to be the issue, for he was always strongly impressed with the idea that he should not live long. To this succeeded an extreme nervous irritability of habit; though it does not appear that this was the immediate cause of his death. He died of epilepsy on the 15th July, 1807, in the thirty-seventh year of his age. No religious community ever had the honour to enrol a more respectable member. He was lamented by his friends; and, besides the irreparable loss which his family sustained by his death, the public were sensible of the chasm which it had produced; of the little probability of his place being soon supplied; and they were not slow in expressing their feelings at his funeral.”

It could not be expected that all these chasms would be readily and efficiently supplied from the small number of ministers in the Relief body. The churches, which were stripped of their ministers to supply the vacancies, felt their loss severely, and the general interests of the denomination greatly languished. There is much truth in the remark, that a religious party depends, for public favour, very much upon a few men of eminence giving a

tone to the whole body, and shedding their name and lustre over all its operations. Alas! the synod of Relief was now shorn of its strength.

Another thing that greatly paralyzed the efforts of the Relief church, and of all the other denominations, at the beginning of the 18th century, was the warlike spirit of the age. The whole population were mad about war. Bonaparte was the dreaded monster. An invasion by the French was the perpetual theme. On Sabbath, as on week days, nothing was talked of but the last battle, and the position of the allied armies. The young men were mostly drafted away as recruits. Few were seen in church on Sabbath save old men, women, and children. Even these little tiny creatures were infected with a warlike spirit. Their sports were mimic battles. A minister could not find in his church materials on which to operate, and from which to form religious associations. Trade no doubt was good, and money was plenty; but where were the men to fight the battles of the Lord of hosts? Peace was literally regarded as a curse, and the inhabitants of Scotland gloated over the gazettes filled with the tidings of human carnage. To this source must be traced much of that deadness of religion, and of that practical infidelity which then came over all classes of the community. Had it not been for the Bible and missionary societies which the exigencies of the times called into existence, the brutalizing horrors of the French war, and the tempting offers which every man had to engage in it, would have gone far to strip the church of candidates for the ministry, and to banish from Britain the blessed doctrines of the gospel of peace. Two, or at most three years' study, at the medical classes, would secure £400 annually, in the navy or army; while eight years' study would secure to a dissenting minister, in most cases, little more than £100 of salary. With young men entering college, this disparity had its influence.

The Church of Scotland felt the smallness of their incomes during the rising prices of all commodities at the commencement of the French war, as a discouragement to young men to study for the office of the ministry as much, or even more, than did the Dissenters. Sir Henry Moncrieff exerted himself to get the "small livings" augmented from the unexhausted teinds,—from bishops' tithes,—and by keeping each parish vacant, at least *for one year after the death of the last incumbent*. The landed proprietors quietly set their face against the proposal, and in 1793 the

bill was smothered. This bill was the cause of the first serious breach among the Moderates, coupled with the discountenance which Principal Hill, in 1807, gave to a process favoured by the Edinburgh ministers, to have it declared that the court of teinds might grant repeated augmentations during the lifetime of a minister, if the teinds were not exhausted.\* The genuine government party among them bowed to Lord Melville, who discouraged Moncrieff's measure; but a considerable number of their retainers joined Sir Henry's friends, and complained loudly of the ingratitude of the administration under Pitt in refusing the augmentation, "after they had risked the friendship of their flocks, and their usefulness as pastors to serve them."

By persevering efforts, the exertions of the clergy were crowned with success; and grants of public money, in 1808 and 1810, were made out of the public exchequer, by which every minister's salary was to be raised to £150 annually, and £40 for manse, glebe, and garden, with sacramental expenses. In 1750, the Evangelical party generally opposed the scheme of augmentation; now they were its movers and most strenuous supporters. The other party naturally felt themselves fettered by the views of their friends in office; and as Bryce Johnstone of Holiwood said on the occasion, allowed Lord Melville, in the character of Balaam, "to smite the dumb ass on which he rode."

\* The breach which took place between Principal Hill and the Edinburgh ministers, in 1807, is amply detailed in his *Life* by Dr. Cook, pp. 189—207.



## CHAP. XXIV.

THE DAWN OF RETURNING FREEDOM AFTER THE FRENCH REVOLUTION—REFORMS IN THE RELIEF DENOMINATION—RELIEF DIVINITY HALL—ORGAN CONTROVERSY.

ABOUT fifteen years after the French revolution, the stupor which had come over the public mind began to pass away. Men slowly saw, that in contending against the infidel philosophy and military aggressions of France, they were allowing themselves, by designing men, to be stripped of their rights as free-born Britons, and reduced to the condition of Russian serfs. A reaction took place. The heart of freedom began to beat, and a craving was felt in the public mind for those speculations and discussions on which freedom lives. The genius of liberty soon produced what was eagerly desired. The *Eclectic Review* in England, and the *Edinburgh Review* in Scotland, sprung into existence about the same period, and brought a surprising degree of talent into the field in defence of liberty. In both of them there was a degree of mental acumen, cultivated taste, and matured judgment, which not only kept up the excitement which had begun to prevail, but which imparted to it a higher tone, and led the public mind captive. The *Eclectic Review* connected the claims of freedom with dissent and evangelical doctrine; while the *Edinburgh Review* advocated the cause of liberty in connection with the happiness and civil polity of the kingdom.

The war with Bonaparte languished. Discontent ensued. Pitt, in the beginning of 1806, died of a broken heart, because all his plans had failed; and Dundas, afterwards Lord Melville, his able colleague, had become bankrupt in character. Fox, in the course of a few months, sunk under dropsy, and followed him to the tomb. Mere ordinary men were left at the helm of affairs. Public opinion, thrown back upon itself, drew a stronger breath when its eye was abstracted from persons and directed to principles;

and within the walls of parliament, it compelled, in 1807, the abolition of the slave trade. Under Pitt, four of the king's sons had voted for its continuance; but now it was doomed to perish amid "loud acclamations of popular applause." On the very night of its abrogation, other public abuses were designated as victims next to be attacked and sacrificed upon the altar of the commonwealth.\* In a few years, Parliamentary reform, Catholic emancipation, and all the old topics of discussion prior to the French revolution, began to be resumed, both within and without the walls of parliament, and strenuously and openly discussed, under the conviction that the constitution might be improved without being destroyed.

The Missionary, Bible, and Tract societies, no doubt, contributed much to diffuse purity of faith, and to strengthen the principles of civil and religious liberty. The Bible contains the true law of liberty, and the missionary, even when he is eschewing politics, is the best expounder of rational freedom, by teaching all men not to oppress but to love each other. This was clearly discerned by the worldly politician. A motion was therefore made in the court of the East India company of Directors—"to bring home all the missionaries; to recall Buchanan by name, as a culprit; and to prohibit the circulation, or even translation of the Scriptures."† The attempt was defeated.

Missions at home were also watched with a suspicious eye. In 1811, Lord Sidmouth amended an old bill of Pitt's, (1796,) against itinerancy and local missions, and attempted to have it enacted, "that no man could have a license to preach unless he previously produced a certificate of his moral character from six respectable householders, and from three members of the sect to which he belonged, that he was fit for the office of a teacher."‡ Against this persecuting enactment, the friends of religious liberty rose like one man, and its proposer was compelled to withdraw it. The government shrunk from muzzling the mouth of the home missionaries, as the East India Directors had failed to stigmatize the foreign. Religious freedom triumphed, and bound another wreath of laurel around her brow.

Scotland, as an incorporated portion of Great Britain, partook of this improved state of public opinion, both as to the interests of evangelical truth, and the rights and liberties of the people.

\* Wilberforce's Life.

† Wilberforce's Life, 1808, vol. iii. p. 359.

‡ Wilberforce's Life, vol. iii. p. 509.

Dissenters and liberal churchmen formed a numerous and imposing body at the anniversaries of religious societies, and the fashionable public were disabused, by their eloquent speeches, of the false prejudice, that orthodoxy was connected with cant and silliness. It was on the platform of religious associations, and in connection with Dissenters, that the evangelical portion of the Church of Scotland rose into importance, and began to regain its long lost ascendancy. Large towns, where there was something of popular election, then began to look out for men of popular talents who would fill their churches. Religious magazines, such as the 'Christian Instructor,' which started upon the broad basis of common support from churchmen and Dissenters, and which lent to each its aid, gave an impetus to the doctrines of the cross, and the cause of Christian liberty, which was felt throughout the land. Dr. Andrew Thomson, of St. George's, Edinburgh, was not a light which could burn under a bushel. Dr. M'Crie also invested the old reformers with freshness and life, and a zeal for liberty. Strange as it may appear, while Dr. M'Crie was a narrow-minded sectary in religion, yet he was in all civil matters the friend of freedom. Slavery could not breathe in his pages.

Both sides of the Secession having acquired spiritual views of the kingdom of Christ, were diffusing them throughout their congregations, and teaching them to hail those as brethren who believed the same gospel, and joined with them in conducting the same religious and benevolent societies. They ceased, henceforward, from the practice of *debarring* every sect, by name, from the Lord's Supper, but themselves.

The Relief were filled like others with indignation against the principles of Sidmouth's bill, and felt that they were declining in their attachment and advocacy of the great principles of religious liberty. A servile spirit had come over some of her ministers. She was forgetting the ground on which she had originally stood, in contending for the rights of the Christian people. Her fathers were gone, and a new generation had sprung up, who had entered upon liberty as their inheritance, instead of fighting and making sacrifices for its attainment. Accordingly, in 1812, the Rev. Mr. Pitcairn, of Kelso, moved an overture in the synod, which was afterwards cordially enacted as a standing regulation: "That the presbyteries in connection with the synod, in addition to the other pieces of trials usually prescribed for young men in order to license, shall examine them upon their knowledge of the princi-

ples of religious liberty in general, and especially the principles of the synod of Relief, as a distinct body of professing Christians : and, further, that it be recommended to all the ministers in their connection, to embrace every favourable opportunity, and employ every prudent method, to explain and enforce these principles in their daily ministrations, and in a particular manner, in admitting members to the communion and fellowship of the Relief church."

The Rev. Mr. Pitcairn, who brought forward this motion, was one of those choice spirits whom the God of heaven sometimes appoints to pay a transient visit to this world, and shows them to the church, while yet he hastens to make them up among his jewels. "He was a native of Glasgow, and trained up under Mr. Bell, of Dovehill. He was the bosom friend of Struthers, of College-street, and in him he found a companion worthy of his genius. They began the career of life about the same period. They lived for years in the same house,—studied at the same university,—entered the ministry about the same time, and were honoured to fix an era in the history of the Relief body, and to give it a name among other denominations, which it did not formerly possess." \* He was learned, judicious, eloquent, devout, and might have occupied pulpits permanently in Glasgow, Edinburgh, or London, all of which were pressingly offered him, but he preferred his first flock to richer congregations. His age and character at the time when he made the motion already noticed, qualified him without ostentation to read his brethren a lesson of duty, and to summon the original friends of religious liberty to their ancient standard, and to use means to imbue the minds of a rising generation with Relief principles. Liberty was again beginning to shine forth after its dark eclipse, and they, like others, must rejoice in its beams.

The Relief church was still suffering from the premature death of many of its most able ministers. The war was still draining off nearly all the young men of the country. In the year 1813, the Rev. William Thomson, Glasgow, laid upon the table of the synod the following overture:—"That young men intending to apply for license as preachers, in the Relief denomination, shall, immediately after finishing their classical and philosophical studies, or after enrolling as students of divinity, make their intentions known to

\* Address delivered to the Relief Congregation of Kelso, on Sabbath, 22d Feb., 1829, after the Funeral of the Rev. John Pitcairn, by the Rev. Mr. Johnston. Edin. : 1829.



the presbytery in whose bounds they reside—that the presbytery, after examining them in the languages and philosophy, shall prescribe to them from time to time such discourses, and bring them under such examinations, relative to their improvement in theological study, as may be deemed expedient; and if any, from being undecided as to the religious denomination which they shall join, or from any other reasonable cause which they may assign, shall neglect compliance with the above regulation, after commencing their theological studies, they shall in no case be taken upon trials for license, till they have been at least one full year under the cognisance of the presbytery.” The synod, after mature deliberation, adopted the measure, and the different presbyteries proceeded to act upon it with zeal and diligence.

It soon answered the end in view. The young men who placed themselves under the superintendence of their respective presbyteries, came forth in a few years clothed with the office of preachers, and gladdened the hearts of those churches which, for a long period, had been very partially supplied with the dispensation of religious ordinances. It was even a far more important matter than the synod at the time anticipated. Providence was paving the way for what they did not understand. The time was approaching, when their students were to be virtually excluded from the divinity halls of the different Scotch universities. The sectarian blow was not dreaded. Hitherto, the university teachers of theology had treated Relief students kindly, and without any marked difference between them and others. Impartiality, however, was speedily to cease. Providence imperceptibly led them to lay the foundation, on which they could stand and bear the shock.

In 1816, the synod began to enact some very salutary regulations about the constitution of their churches. As early as 1797, the General Assembly had interposed its authority about the constitutions of chapels-of-ease; but the Relief synod had culpably neglected to attend to legal forms in erecting new congregations. They had left the matter in the hands of the laity, and these being often plain Christian men, who were mainly concerned about the enjoyment of a pure gospel, had too frequently overlooked the necessary technicalities of law in getting the title-deeds of their properties. Churches were in this way lost to the body, after presbyteries had fostered and reared them. The ancient system also of building the church by subscriptions, and assign-

ing to the subscriber so many sittings according to the money he gave, had suited sufficiently well during the first generation; but, when those sittings descended to their children, who perhaps belonged to a different religious denomination, and who yet claimed a right to interfere in the secular affairs of the church, it led to great confusion and abuse. These evils the synod now began to check and remedy.

One reform led to another. The synod had hitherto paid no attention to statistical principles in the management of its fund for the support of the widows and young fatherless children of its ministers. It was constructed on the principles of charity, and not of mutual assurance. Its capital consisted mainly of money collected from the churches, and a small annual sum from each minister. So long as the widows were few, it yielded them something respectable; but, as they increased, it gradually diminished till it became exceedingly paltry. To the late Dr. Thomson, of Paisley, belongs the honour of having applied his mind to the subject, and of inducing the synod to adopt a regular scheme of rates by which a minister can secure an annuity to his family according to the annual payment which he makes. The scheme has the advantage over some others of providing both for widows and fatherless children. After upwards of twenty years of trial, and submitting it to the best actuaries in London, it has manifested itself a sound and healthy scheme, and bids fair to continue a blessing to a helpless, but most deserving class of individuals. Its author is now gone, but his memory will long be kept fragrant by those whom he has kindly shielded from dependence and poverty.

A fair opening for introducing the Relief denomination into Halifax, Canada, took place in 1817; and the synod cordially responded to the petition of a number of respectable persons in St. Johns, who had built a handsome church, and wished to be supplied with a minister. The person ultimately fixed on was in every way respectable, but there was one circumstance not generally known to the committee, which rendered him altogether unsuitable for the important trust. His mind had, at one time, been unhinged during his studies. The liability still continued, though for years he had been completely restored. Soon after his arrival he was observed to give very *outré* orders about the regulation of his church. When spoken to, he became passionate and unreasonable. A hurried departure to the United States convinced all

that he was an object of the sincerest pity. His mind was in part quieted by the voyage. He soon obtained a Presbyterian church in Philadelphia, for he was an excellent preacher. His mental disease, however, speedily returned, and he sunk under a severe paroxysm of his disorder. The church in Halifax was sadly disheartened from the failure of its plans. A party connected with the Church of Scotland wormed themselves into the pulpit, and the prospect of introducing the Relief church into the country was blasted, and came to nought. The failure is deeply to be regretted, for there is a spirit of rancour and bigotry in the Scotch Presbyterian church in Canada which requires to be counteracted, if there is to be peace in those lands.

The rising spirit of civil and religious liberty in Scotland was attended with rivalry and jealousy among the different religious parties. The emulation was, who should take the lead among the people, whose favour now began to be courted, because their power now began to be felt. Various little arts were resorted to among all sects unworthy of themselves. One of the most dastardly was the closing of the divinity halls of the Scotch universities against Relief students. According to the strict letter of the law, a divinity student required to produce a certificate of Christian character from his parish minister before he could be enrolled. This was never known to be refused to a Dissenter *because he was a Dissenter*. All the Relief students got them, and many of the Burghers also must have got the same; for, while they attended their own hall in harvest, many of them also attended during the winter the divinity halls of the universities. All denominations studied theology together on the best of terms. About the year 1815, a novelty was introduced into the Glasgow divinity hall. The Dissenters had to declare themselves, and they were marked as such in the Catalogue. Young minds are always suspicious. Some students, after this, complained of cold treatment. It is not believed that, under Dr. M'Gill, there was much in the suspicion. A more serious case took place in the course of a year or two in Aberdeen. A Relief minister's son was refused enrolment, unless he would become a communicant in the Established church. The Rev. Mr. Dunn, Cupar-Angus, stated the case to the synod. They could give no relief to Mr. Paterson, who had been treated so harshly, and the discussion was waved.

The Rev. James Stewart, of Anderston, thus lived to see

the evils of not having a Relief Professor of Divinity, against which, in his younger years, he had repeatedly overtured the synod to provide. He was now almost the only remaining individual of the earlier Fathers of the Relief. He could no longer move in the matter. He left it to others to do, by something like compulsion, what he had often wished them to do by choice. His peaceful departure soon afterwards took place. The outlines of his life and character are not yet forgotten. He is recollected with pleasure as a person of fine talents, and singular tact in the management of ecclesiastical business.

He was a native of Dunblane, as were also Hutchison and Dun, and yet there never was a Relief church in the place. He received license in the Established Church of Scotland, but, on mature deliberation, saw it his duty to join the synod of Relief. As Mr. Neil, his predecessor, was unable to preach for nearly twelve months before he died, the Rev. Mr. Stewart was invited to assist him, and as he gave universal satisfaction, he was, after a few months, called to be his successor. He was ordained to the pastorate of the Relief church, Anderston, by the Relief Presbytery of Glasgow, on the 15th August, 1775.

During the long period of forty-four years he laboured with great diligence and acceptance among his flock. It was his first and only charge. The three sermons he published on different public occasions, (and they were all that he could ever be prevailed on to issue from the press,) bear marks of an acute and well-furnished mind. In 'Britain's Fall,' in his 'Plan of Reform,' and in 'The Banners of Britain Displayed,' he shows that he was a strict observer of passing events, and that he was not afraid to speak what he thought. In 1796, when a concern for the benighted heathen began to be felt throughout the British churches, and efforts to be made to send them the gospel, Mr. Stewart, and Mr. William Gillespie, his elder, were the chief office-bearers in organizing the Relief Highland Mission, and sending forth ministers and preachers acquainted with the Gaelic language to instruct, to preach, and to distribute books in the Highlands, which were then, as has been shown, in a most destitute condition.

In process of time, he who had long laboured in the vineyard of God, began to feel the frailties of old age coming over his frame. On the 4th June, 1819, he came to his latter end like a sheaf of corn ripened for the harvest, in the 74th year of his age, and 44th of his ministry. On that occasion, one who



knew him well, said of him with propriety, "It will not, to those who knew the character of the deceased, appear to be the common language of panegyric, when it is said, that in him the denomination to which he belonged has lost one of its most distinguished members. His talents indeed would have rendered him an ornament to any denomination. To discourses evangelical in matter, neat and lucid in arrangement, simple and correct in style, he imparted an interest which, in the hands of many, they would have wanted—by a striking, though not boisterous, a commanding, but graceful address. Chastened fervour and rich variety were his characteristics in prayer. In church judicatories he was fitted to take an active lead, not more by his acquaintance with ecclesiastical regulations, than by the soundness of his judgment, and his knowledge of the world. In the private circle he was not merely to the young and to the old an agreeable and instructive companion, but he uniformly, without ever descending from the dignity of his office, enlivened it by his vivacity, pleasantry, and wit, while his fine sensibilities enabled him to enter with equal ease into the feelings of the mourner. Untinged by bigotry and illiberality, the range of his acquaintance was extensive, and he has left in every party those who will sincerely join with his friends and congregation in their regret for his loss."\*

The synod was now placed in a new predicament, as to the education of its candidates for the ministry. It was believed that the Established church could regulate the national divinity halls as it chose, and apply to them any test-act which bigotry or spleen might suggest. The Rev. Mr. Kirkwood, of Edinburgh, having therefore consulted with some of his friends, submitted to the synod the following overture: "That, while students of divinity connected with the Relief synod continue as formerly, under the inspection of the particular presbyteries within the bounds of which they reside, and attend the usual course of theological studies in the regular universities, they shall also be placed under the charge of a professor of divinity, appointed from amongst themselves by the members of synod." This took place in 1820. The spirit of the overture was anything but sectarian. It still aimed at keeping the students in the Halls of the universities, while it provided a synodical professor; so that, if the same exclusive practice which had begun to appear, were persevered in, the synod could sustain

\* Glasgow Courier, 15th June, 1819

the theological course of its own professor, and be independent of all petty persecution. It was merely an old measure, revived and dug up from its grave after sleeping in it for thirty years.

In the year 1793, after the Church of Scotland, in M'Gill's case, had shown itself to be deeply tinged with Socinian principles, and after Smith, of Dunfermline, had also shown himself to be infected with the same opinions, and escaped ecclesiastical censure in the Relief church, by abruptly taking refuge in the Establishment, the synod took into consideration, on the motion of Mr. Stewart, the propriety of having a Professor of Theology elected from among themselves. From some cause or other the proposal was permitted to fall asleep on the synod records, and an opportunity was sluggishly allowed to pass unimproved, of greatly benefiting the Relief body.

Had the Church of Scotland displayed anything of a conciliatory spirit, the overture of Mr. Kirkwood might also have slumbered, and become quiescent. They took care to keep it alive, and to give it additional life. During the two or three years when it was submitted to the consideration of churches and sessions, the General Assembly were taking measures for having it enacted, that no person should be allowed, as a regular student, to enter the divinity halls of the different Scotch universities, till he was examined by the presbytery within the bounds of which he resided. This was given out as an arrangement for increasing and bettering the qualifications of their own students; but, in the discussion thereof, though the condition of the dissenting students was known, no hint was ever dropped that they would be allowed a dispensation. The law was to be rendered universal and imperative. And it has been so. A person, by paying the fees, may go in and sit, and hear the lectures of the Professor, but he is not considered a student, nor is he treated as such. The evangelical side of the church, whatever were their motives, have the credit of this divisive measure.

In 1823, the Relief synod, without a vote, agreed to adopt the overture for having a Professor elected from among themselves, with the exception of that part of it which renders it imperative on the students of divinity, to attend the divinity halls of the universities. This was now rendered impossible.

At next meeting of synod, the Rev. James Thomson, Paisley, was unanimously chosen Professor. His literary and theological qualifications marked him out for the office; and in the course of

a few years thereafter, the Glasgow university, in the very best taste, and showing itself superior to clerical jealousies, conferred on him the degree of "Doctor of Divinity;"—which lost none of its honour in being worn by him.

The Relief hall was conducted very much on the same principles as other theological institutions in the country. A few improvements were adopted from some of the English theological academies. It was enacted, "that the literary and scientific qualifications for admission into the divinity halls of the Established church shall be required in Relief students, viz., a regular course of attendance on the Greek, Logic, Moral, and Natural Philosophy classes, in any of the universities in Scotland." On these departments of study, "he shall be examined by the presbytery before admission, and the presbytery shall also attest their satisfaction with his moral and religious character."

The text-book adopted in the hall, was the Westminster Confession of Faith. The Professor divided it into four portions, delivering a course of lectures upon each in succession—thus finishing his whole course in four years, which is the regular term of a student's attendance. From the English institutions, the practice was adopted of making the students write out their thoughts on all the leading topics of theological study, and submitting their essays year by year to the Professor's inspection. Some of the other improvements were,—to prescribe a great number of short weekly exercises, which the Professor was to examine, and correct,—to have regular meetings for oral examination,—to attend to the cultivation of the gift of prayer,—to teach them the spiritual nature of the kingdom of Jesus,—and to instruct them how they were to conduct themselves as ministers of Christ in a dissenting denomination. Fears were entertained, at first, that the people would not support the institution; but these fears speedily turned out to be groundless, and the churches have long since gratefully acknowledged, that the Hall has proved to them a signal blessing.

One improvement led to another. The laws and regulations of the Relief body, for conducting its business, were lying in their minute books. They had never been printed for general circulation, and the younger members of court, from ignorance of them, often fell into mistakes. Besides, they required a thorough revision. Messrs. Pitcairn and Crawford were mainly instrumental in drawing the attention of synod, in 1823, to the confused state of their legislation, as it slumbered upon the pages of

their records. It was resolved, therefore, that a pretty full digest of laws should be drawn up, which should embody the general regulations of the synod, and any improvements which might be grafted upon them, so that ministers, elders, and congregations might be aided in carrying on their respective offices, and discharging their peculiar duties. The digest was "to be in accordance with the avowed principles of the synod." The want of such a compend had long been felt. The synod, in giving this injunction, did not intend to legislate on every point. This would have called forth a ponderous volume. In a few general propositions, it was intended merely to state how Christian churches were to be managed, and their business conducted in accordance with the mind of Christ, as expressed by his Spirit in the sacred volume. The committee were to take for granted, *as common law*, the great leading principles of Presbyterian church government, and they were faithful to their instructions.

The digest of laws was in due time prepared, circulated, discussed, and adopted. It contains very good outlines for conducting business in Presbyterian church courts. It gives a lucid view of the constitution and forms observed in the Relief churches. There are in it a few points which bring out the peculiarities of the denomination, and which, of necessity, were the main topics of discussion.

The Westminster Confession of Faith is the standard book adopted by the synod, as expressive of the sense in which they understand the doctrines of the Bible. The most of Presbyterian denominations have a *formula* appended to the Confession, either with the view of rendering it more stringent, as to every word and argument which it contains; or of giving some part of it a twist, or of relaxing it, so that he who signs it is not bound as to those portions of it by his signature. The Relief church keep to the simple mode in which the Confession was at first received in Scotland, acknowledging, without duplicity, "the truth of its matter." The adoption of the stringent mode prescribed in later times by the Church of Scotland, and which was also enacted by the Relief synod at the time of M'Gill and Smith's heresies, was merely temporary, and was abrogated a few years thereafter.

As the Westminster Confession gives a great degree of power to the magistrate in regard to religion, it became a matter of very grave discussion, how those parts of it, which were of an intolerant and persecuting spirit, should be dealt with; and, farther,



how they had always been treated by the fathers and founders of the Relief church. The oldest members were on this point the best authorities. In the digest as circulated by the committee, the question to be put to a minister or elder at his ordination, and to which he was expected to answer in the affirmative, was as follows:—"Do you own and believe the doctrine of the Westminster Confession of Faith, to be founded on, and consistent with, the word of God, *except in the particulars specified by the Relief church?*" This language was considered as giving forth an uncertain sound, unless the particulars were at the same time specified. It was certainly liable to misconception. Some were for specifying the obnoxious chapters or phrases, others were for exacting from the entrant a positive testimony against the magistrate having anything at all to do with religion in his official capacity. The Rev. William Thomson, who was one of the oldest members present, opposed both these motions, and said that the Relief fathers did not carry their principles so high, and were not so intolerant as to refuse office to a person, though he might differ from the general sentiments of the body as to the power of the civil magistrate, and the precise limits in religious matters where it ought to stop. As a church, they disclaimed the connection of church and state, but they made it a matter of forbearance with weaker brethren. After much reasoning how to construct a phrase so as to embody this sentiment, it was suggested that it might be cast into the following form:—"Do you own, and will you adhere, to the doctrine of the Westminster Confession of Faith, as founded on, and consistent with, the word of God, except in so far as said Confession recognises the power of the civil magistrate to interfere in religious concerns?"

By this negative form the office-bearer assents to the whole doctrine of the Confession, "as to the truth of its matter," save on one point, "the magistrate's interference in religion," which is made a matter on which he gives forth no confession of his faith. The doctrine of the Relief church, as a *dissenting* church from the Establishment, and recognising the spiritual nature of Messiah's kingdom, is clear; and yet, in testifying against persecution, they are careful not to persecute a tender conscience, labouring, it may be, under the influence of early prejudice. In this form the question was allowed to stand, and it was believed that such an avowal was in accordance with the original principles of the Relief church. The synod were thus careful to make

opposition to state religions a matter of forbearance, with weak and doubting brethren, as it is not a point essential to salvation.

Another principle discussed at considerable length, was that of free or catholic communion with VISIBLE saints, even though they should differ from the synod on minor points of faith. The xxvith chapter of the Confession, though improperly circumscribed in its import by some religious parties, was considered as embodying the sentiments of the synod on the topic, and, therefore, that no new legislation was required either on the article of ministerial or of Christian communion. All who held the Head, Christ, were to be held as brethren. On this comprehensive basis the church of Relief stands.

Another point of church polity which these regulations were intended to bring out for the guidance of church courts, was the scripture principle, that in all cases of discipline, "private and summary proceedings shall be preferred to such as are public and formal." The old mode of purging scandal in Scotland, by something like popish penance, was considered harsh and unscriptural; and it was recommended, that far more attention should be paid to our Saviour's rule, in Matt. xviii. 15—17; that every session and congregation should, if possible, manage their own cases of discipline, and that presbyteries and synods should employ all the gentler methods of counsel and advice before they pronounced authoritatively a sentence of excommunication. They were, if possible, not to break, but to bind up the bruises of the church of Christ.

It would be tedious to glance at all the chapters of these Synodical Regulations, which form a small pamphlet. Suffice it to say, that they are of the greatest use to any one who wishes to know a little of ecclesiastical law, and how the constitution of congregations should be formed,—how churches should be managed, and how ministers are to be scripturally called. On this last topic they have been of signal use in fixing a question which was a most vexatious one from the commencement of the body. Persons who subscribed money for building a church, or sitters, even though not members, often pressed their claims to have a vote, at least for the first minister, as they were presumptive members. It is now clearly laid down that the right of calling the minister is in the communicants, where also lies the duty of his support, and that the Church must be organized before a moderation can be granted.

The Relief never allowed their calls to be written and signed

on stamped paper, and to have embodied within them a promise as to the precise sum of stipend to be paid. This was considered as giving the minister too strong a legal claim over the people individually. The plan adopted by them took various shapes and forms. Sometimes it was a bond: this was not much liked. Sometimes the stipend was marked in the minute books of the managers and presbytery; and at other times it was a written obligation from the managers as *managers*, but not as private individuals. By the present regulations, the managers are simply to make an entry of the stipend promised to their minister in their minute books, and to furnish the presbytery with an extract for insertion in theirs. Every thing indeed was made as simple, and stated in as few words as possible, that plain Christians might apprehend the meaning of the regulations, and not be lost in a world of words.

While these regulations were passing through the various sessions and presbyteries to whom they had been sent down, it was thought by some that there might be prefixed to them a short history of the Relief church, together with an acknowledged profession of the mode in which it recognised the Confession of Faith; together with a specification of the points in which it differed from other churches. This was first brought forward by the Rev. Mr. Barr in 1829; but several parts of the motion never met with much countenance, as it would have terminated in "a testimony" apart from the Westminster Confession, which was the standard book the synod wished simply to adhere to. A short history was prepared by a committee, of which the late James C. Ewing was the principal author. When it came to be considered by the synod it bore evident traces of his clear, acute, and discerning mind; but it was considered, to use a soft phrase, too denominational, and on some points to carry the anti-establishment principle rather too high. The Voluntary controversy was now beginning, and this gave point to his pen. After having been recommitted to the care of another committee for farther examination and improvement, it ultimately dropped out of notice, and has never since been revived.

It is rather a singular coincidence, and was not known to the members of synod who were pressing forward these measures, that at the time when the synodical laws had been previously overhauled, about the years 1796 and 1800, the very same attempt was made to get a history of the Relief church, and a compen-

dium of its doctrines printed along with its regulations, which were then intended to be published. A committee was appointed for the purpose, consisting of Messrs. Hutchison, Dun, and Stewart. A short history was prepared for examination by the Rev. Mr. Stewart, and a compendium of doctrine was prepared by Mr. Hutchison. It is not known what Mr. Dun did, unless he collected the laws and regulations which were printed in a trial copy, and never went farther. Mr. Hutchison's compend was rejected on the ground that it would eventually turn out to be "an act and testimony." There is little doubt that his compend of doctrine was either the same, or somewhat akin to that which is to be found in the Appendix, under the same title. Mr. Hutchison strenuously opposed Mr. Stewart's history, as not embodying the views of the Relief fathers in leaving the Establishment, and unless it were amended by a committee, he moved that the synod should not accept of it. The threefold project of 1800, in all its parts, died a natural death, and, in 1834, the Laws and Regulations were the only portion adopted. The synod has always been exceedingly jealous of adding any standard books to the Westminster Confession of Faith, and still remains of the same opinion.

From a deficiency of preachers, and the engrossing and deadening effects of the French war, the synod had made no efforts for many years after the failure of their Highland mission, to diffuse the gospel in the destitute parts of the country. No sooner had the institution of a Relief theological hall trained up an abundant supply of candidates for the ministry, than it set itself afresh to yield obedience to the command of Christ,—“Preach the gospel to every creature.” In the year 1827, Mr. Harvey brought the following overture before the synod:—“As it is incumbent on all who believe the gospel to exert themselves according to their abilities and opportunities, to extend its invaluable blessings to others who are destitute of them in our own as well as in heathen lands; and, convinced that there are still many districts in our own country, which are either not favoured with an evangelical ministry, or not adequately supplied with the means of religious instruction; and, satisfied that our privileges, as Dissenters, furnish us with many facilities for supplying these deficiencies; and having a number of excellent preachers unemployed on the Lord's day, whose services might be extensively useful,—for these and similar reasons, it is overtured, as the most likely method of accomplishing these impor-



tant purposes. 1. That the synod enjoin all the presbyteries under its inspection to transmit, at its first meeting, an account of the state of religion in their respective districts,—the places which are not adequately supplied with religious instruction,—and the probable encouragement which our ministers and preachers are likely to receive. 2. That an annual collection be made in all the congregations for the support of the society when organized and put in active operation.” This overture met with a very cordial reception. The presbyteries, in due time, reported upon it, the preachers memorialized for its adoption, and it was amply discussed at several subsequent meetings of synod. In the year 1834, the synod regularly constituted the Home Missionary Association, and adopted a code of rules for conducting its affairs.

This society has ever since been carried on with considerable spirit. It has been the means of supplying several destitute localities with the “sincere milk of the word.” In not a few districts it has also indirectly been the source of much spiritual good. When the church-extension society of the Church of Scotland, in several instances, saw that a congregation would be formed, they soon discovered, with the eye of a lynx, that the place was *destitute*, and with their abundant command of funds, speedily erected a church, and dexterously elbowed those out of the locality, who, under God, had given the people a taste for religion. Even when Christ was preached out of envy and strife, —*if Christ was preached*, the apostle could rejoice. The file has its use as well as the teeth of the saw which it sharpens. Still it has often been not a little galling to see others building upon the foundation which Relief ministers and probationers had laid.

In the year 1829, a very sharp controversy raged for a season in the Relief body, which threatened at one time to produce a disruption. The Rev. Mr. Johnston, of Roxburgh Place chapel, Edinburgh, in the beginning of that year, had introduced an organ into his church, without overturing the synod, consulting the Edinburgh Presbytery, or making any intimation to his brethren in reference to the innovation. Some of the sister churches were highly offended, and Mr. Johnston was ordered to remove it, or otherwise he would be extruded as contumacious from the synod. He preferred the latter alternative, and after remaining for a time in his solitary position, he applied to the

Church of Scotland, and was received into it on the condition that he would remove the organ. ✓

The "organ case," no doubt, was brought more speedily to a termination than it would otherwise have been, from the circumstance of a similar case having been discussed at great length in the year 1807, in the Established Presbytery of Glasgow. Dr. Ritchie had, like Mr. Johnston, introduced an organ, without the knowledge or concurrence of his brethren, into St. Andrews church. The subject had been discussed at great length in the presbytery, and also from the press. All that learning and research could produce from history and scripture, for and against, the use of instrumental music in the worship of the New Testament church, had been eloquently addressed to the public mind. The use of the organ was held to be unauthorized by the New Testament, the early practice of the Christian church, and the constitution of the Church of Scotland,—and the offending organ had been silenced and removed. Dr. Ritchie had not even ventured to appeal the case to the Assembly. The opinion of the country, and of the leading ministers in the west of Scotland, had thus been tested and brought out. The old Glasgow controversy, at the distance of twenty-two years, was not yet fallen asleep. The majority of the Relief synod, for it was only carried by a majority, no doubt used the same arguments, and followed the same course as the Established church, and thus the uniformity of religious worship, according to the form prescribed by the Westminster standards, was kept unimpaired.\* It is a good scripture rule, that the strong should bear with the weak in all matters not essential to salvation. On whichever side reason and argument lay, the judgment delivered by the synod was safe, and, in the circumstances, the more discreet. Mr. Johnston ought to have begun by presenting an overture on the subject to the synod, as he had vowed at his ordination to follow no divisive courses.

\* Those who wish to study the subject, and see what can be said on both sides of the question, may consult 'A Statement of the Proceedings of the Presbytery of Glasgow relative to the use of the Organ in St. Andrews Church in the Public Worship of God.' Glasgow: 1808. 'An Apology for the Organ.' By the Rev. William Anderson. And 'A Chapter of Organ History.' By the same. Glasgow: 1829. 'A Reply to an Apology for the Organ.' By the Rev. James Russell Glasgow: 1829. 'A Vindication of the Sentence of the Synod of Relief.' By the Rev. A. Harvey. Glasgow: 1829. Appendix to an Apology for the Organ. By the Rev. William Anderson.

## CHAPTER XXV.

STATE OF THE COUNTRY AFTER PEACE WITH FRANCE—UNION OF  
THE SECEDERS—GAIRLOCH HERESY—APOCRYPHAL CONTROVERSY  
—REFORM BILL.

WHILE important improvements were taking place within the courts and congregations of the Relief synod, other matters were taking place in the country at large, and within other religious denominations, which were moulding public opinion and furthering the interests of religion. After the allies had twice marched to Paris, consigned Napoleon to the top of a tropical rock, thrown open the countries of Europe to travellers of every kind, and united in proclaiming and guaranteeing something like universal peace; England, weary and wasted with war, was intoxicated with gladness. The public mind was extremely buoyant. The world was henceforward to be the market-house of Britain. For a short time, particularly after the peace in 1814, trade was excellent, wages were high, and goods were crowded upon the shores of countries which had long been closed against all English imports. The cup of gladness had scarcely begun to be tasted when the immense load of war taxes, not yet repealed, began to press heavily upon the resources of the country, and distress in various quarters began to appear. The farmers were the first to feel the pressure. Their leases were entered into on the calculation of war prices. Foreign provisions soon brought down the markets. To protect the agriculturists the corn laws were enacted, which speedily raised the price of the produce of their farms. Trade was instantly depressed,—men were thrown out of employment,—wages fell,—bad crops in 1816–17 spread a general gloom over the face of the nation. Riotous, or at least, threatening assemblages of the people met in various quarters. Instead of soothing the public mind, Lord Castlereagh, whom Wilberforce calls, not malevolently,

but as descriptive of his character, "a cold-blooded fish," recommended and carried the suspension of the Habeas Corpus act; so that the people might be coerced by military power, rather than have their wrongs and grievances inquired into, and redressed in the ordinary course of law. This was a lamentable blunder on the part of a man who had acted as one of the leading diplomatists in Europe, at the deliberations of the allied sovereigns. The people were stung to madness. They had combined to resist the depression of wages, and had failed. They now directed their minds to the abuses of government, and demanded parliamentary reform with greater keenness and rancour than had even been done at the period of the French revolution. The nation became alarmed for a civil war. As in all such cases, privations and sufferings produced strong feelings; and popular orators, who threw themselves upon the sympathies of the people, fanned the flame of rising discontent. To test the loyalty of the masses, men were hired as spies, and furnished with money, to mingle with the people, get themselves enrolled as members of their political clubs, and, by forced appliances, to bring their plans prematurely to a head, that the extent of the evil might be known, and all rebellious tendencies repressed. The country was full of soldiers disbanded from the late war. The tales of foreign victories had not yet died away. The public mind, in the common walks of life, was intoxicated with the idea of what could be done to coerce or overturn a government by force of arms. The spies flattered each little village into the belief of a universal rising. Little parties, under the cloud of night, were taught, by those who had been in the army, the military step, and the bare outlines of defence and attack. The deluded men, stricken through with poverty, were led as sheep to the slaughter. False and inflammatory placards were dispersed over the country. A few were hastily drawn out from their workshops, with guns, pikes, swords, and whatever lethal weapon they could clutch, under the expectation that there were thousands or millions in arms in other quarters. Some of them being seized and tried, three in Scotland, and a few more in England, were beheaded as traitors and rebels. Multitudes grieved that their blood was spilt. Radical reform, which till this time had been a byword and scorn amongst the middle classes of the community, now became an appellation in which they gloried. A rigour beyond the law, made those whose blood had been shed, to be regarded as political martyrs. From



this period is to be dated the first great disruption which took place between the higher and lower ranks in society. Class legislation now began to be bitterly complained of. Many left religious ordinances never to return. Dissenting churches, however, in a great measure, escaped the storm. Their people were not, to any great extent, involved in the *military mania*, which had spread, by means of paid government agents, like a conflagration, over the country; and some of the judges, to their honour, mentioned the fact of the loyalty of Dissenters, from the tribunals over which they presided. The politics of this period are yet too recent to admit of being fully detailed in the page of history, and their effects are only yet becoming apparent.

After the fall of Napoleon, the religious spirit of Scotland became far more healthy and vigorous. The kind of ultra loyalty which the moderate clergy had thought it their duty to cherish during the French war, was no longer needed, and they began gradually to mellow to the claims of popular rights, and to give their countenance to those religious societies which once they endeavoured to frown upon, as the nurseries of republicanism and the theatres of dangerous appeals to the passions of the people. The Rev. Principal Hill, the leader of the Assembly, who, at the end of the preceding century, had repressed everything like missionary effort in the church, now found it necessary so far to yield to the spirit of the age, as to become a subscriber to the Bible society, and to attend its meetings in St. Andrews. He had no great expectations of its doing much good; but the dignitaries of the Church of England, and the virtuous portion of the nobility, were becoming its patrons, and he was too good a man, and too skilful a tactician, not to know that the time was come when the Church of Scotland must not lag behind, but endeavour to take the van, even in such movements as the Haldaneites and Dissenters had primarily favoured. Having refused to co-operate in missions, on a *catholic basis*, with other evangelical Christians, a plan was devised by the Rev. Dr. Inglis, another moderate clergyman, highly respectable for talents and character, for instituting a mission in connection with the Church of Scotland, and sending out its missionaries to the East Indies, to strengthen the Scottish Establishment in that quarter. In 1824, he brought the matter before the Assembly, and secured for it the countenance and support of both sides of the House.

The same desire for popular preachers which had induced the town councils of Edinburgh and Glasgow to call Dr. Thomson to St. George's, and Dr. Chalmers to the Tron church, also began to operate upon lay patrons throughout the country, and the taste of the people was generally consulted. The strong desire for civil liberty, which had, by foreign and forced appliances, led to the Radical outbreak, was also pervading the community on religious liberty, and a well-educated congregation began to insist that they were better able than any patron to judge of the necessary qualifications of their minister. No single circumstance produced this state of matters. It was the natural result of that reaction which took place in the public mind in favour of liberty, after it was seen that the late bloody and expensive French war had, after all, terminated in the enthronement of the old Bourbon dynasty, and the bolstering up of Popery. The glaring elevation of Popery in France, and the discouragement given to Protestantism by its royal family, after their restoration, filled many a British bosom with disgust, and a desire to see their throne again upset.

Upon the DISSENTERS of Scotland the general peace of Europe exercised insensibly a very happy influence. Christians, for a time, imbibed the piping peaceful spirit which was dissolving the land in love and gladness. Peace Societies were formed to prevent, on rational and scriptural principles, the horrors of war from ever again soaking the soil of Europe with human gore. Religious quarrels became less fierce. Divisions among the friends of Christ were openly held to be unnatural, when even the kings of this world were sheathing the sword. The anniversaries of the Bible and Missionary societies, where all evangelical ministers appeared upon the same platforms, and co-operated in the same cause, and were heard advocating it by the same scriptural arguments, contributed, in no small degree, to remove sectarian prejudices of very long standing, and to diffuse among the people a general wish for union. Besides, the ministers, by these meetings, were restrained from speaking evil of each other. The old way of *debarring* from the Lord's table all religious parties but themselves, was scarcely compatible with joining together in diffusing as Christians the blessings of the gospel, and it fell gradually into disuse. The knowledge, civilization, and charity of the 19th century began to obtain their reward; and as there was one faith, one baptism, one spirit, so

it was also felt to be most desirable that there should be but one church. There appeared no good reason why at least the Presbyterian dissenting churches of Scotland should not form one great religious community.

This matter assumed a definite aspect in the year 1818; and the Secession congregations of Mid-Calder and East-Calder had the honour of taking the first step, and bringing it before the religious public. On the 20th of August a considerable number of these two congregations—the one of them Burgher, and the other Antiburgher—met “for the purpose of considering the practicability and advantage of a general union of the various denominations of Dissenters throughout Britain, primarily of all evangelical Presbyterians, when it was unanimously agreed, that, as such a union is highly desirable, so the present seems to be a favourable season for attempting it.” This resolution was published in the religious periodicals of the day, and a considerable number of meetings, in consequence of it, were held throughout the country. From various quarters it was responded to in the most amicable spirit, and the general opinion was spontaneously proclaimed by the press, and from dissenting churches,—“That a general union of all Presbyterian Dissenters throughout Britain, holding evangelical principles and sentiments, was both desirable and practicable.”\*

As the movement for a general union began among the Secession churches, so it spread principally among them, but various causes made it slide from its general basis, and become more limited and denominational in its character than at first intended by its friends. The Secession had been originally one body; their separation was a subject of deep regret; affection was still felt in the midst of their quarrels: all the changes which had passed upon the one had passed upon the other; and, like twin-sisters, they sympathized with each other, and, after seventy years of separation, they seemed still to be moved by one heart. Both had made the power of the civil magistrate a matter of forbearance about the same period, and nearly in the same terms. The points which had been once keenly agitated were in a great measure fallen into oblivion, and the present age scarcely understood them. The obnoxious clause in the burgess oath of some boroughs had been removed by the town-councils, and, except for the sake of contention, there was no remaining

\* M'Kerrow's History, 2d edit., p. 647.

ground of quarrel. The main obstacles being removed by the gentle smoothing hand of time, the two great sections of the Secession church prepared for a union among themselves, as the same bodies had previously united in Ireland and America. It was finally consummated on the 8th September, 1820, amid many congratulations and thanksgivings.

Whether it was the wiser policy to confine, as was done, the union to the two great branches of the Secession, or to have pushed forward the great amalgamating plan, may well be doubted. The tone of public feeling was running high for a comprehensive scheme. The Old Light Burghers formally intimated their wish at least to be admitted into their joint councils, and to have themselves informed whether a union could be accomplished. The Relief synod also had the subject of union before them during the time it was proceeding to a happy termination between the Burghers and Antiburghers; and, in 1821, they adopted the following motion: "That the synod view, with much interest and pleasure, the spirit of union and conciliation manifested by different presbyterian bodies, and anticipate with confidence a period, which they trust is not far distant, when difference of opinion on points of minor importance, and on which mutual forbearance ought to be exercised, shall no longer be a ground of separation and of party distinction among Christians." Prudence, no doubt, dictated that too much should not be attempted at once; and there was a small party in the Antiburgher synod, headed by Professor Paxton, whom they were anxious to retain, and who would have darted off like a rocket if the Relief had been mentioned as likely to be embraced in the proposed union. After all, however, they were not retained. They disjoined themselves from the united body, on the high ground that the basis of the union did not recognise connection with the covenanted Church of Scotland,—condemn free communion, and make sufficient provision for renewing the covenants. This party afterwards united themselves with that of Dr. M'Crie, as being both sections of the old Antiburgher church.

If it could have been foreseen that this was to be the issue of all the coaxing Paxton's party received, it would have been by far the safest and most generous policy to have proposed terms to the Relief church, and to have formed one grand union upon the broad foundation of the gospel economy. Opposition would have given way before the influence of public opinion, and all



the three parties would have taken their seats together at the same time in one church, under one comprehensive union, and upon perfect presbyterian parity.

After the union, the Secession church became one large and powerful body. As many of their congregations were large, and in populous districts, they could concentrate wealth, numbers, and respectability, upon any particular measure, and often thwart or bear down the influence of the Establishment. They spied out the land, and resolved to supply every destitute locality with religious ordinances. Their home missionary operations became extensive. They engaged heartily in foreign missions, and resolved to make the world the theatre on which they would act for the good of man. Light now shone on all her tabernacles.

If the Church of Scotland had continued as much divided within herself as at the end of the preceding century, and if the popular party had co-operated rather with evangelical dissenters than with the moderates, the Seceders would have given the tone to public opinion. About this period, however, the two sections of the Established Church laid aside many of their antipathies; and as a church, they began to follow joint measures for the interests of religion, and the welfare of their "national Zion." The diffusion of liberal opinions had contributed to popularize the moderate clergy, for patrons would scarcely present an unacceptable candidate, and since the termination of the war, there was a superabundance of licentiates among whom they could choose. Orthodox preaching was again becoming fashionable, and probationers and young ministers are very sensitive plants as to public opinion: besides, the evangelical clergy ceased henceforward to be whigs in politics. At one time orthodoxy and whiggism were nearly as inseparable as the substance and shadow; but now, many of the most orthodox men were decided tories, so that the moderates no longer viewed them as fanatics and levellers. The change was not all on either the one side or the other. Like the colours of the rainbow, they melted into each other, each losing a little of its former hue, and putting on an appearance borrowed from its fellow. There was, however, a pervading and prevailing dye. The blush diffused over the whole was "the church;" and joint measures were to be devised and followed, that the Church of Scotland might retain her pre-eminence among all other sects and parties. Dr. Cook, writing in 1820, candidly confesses, "That there is not the same neces-

sity for keeping alive party spirit; and in some late decisions there was displayed, by men of both sides, an ardent zeal for the purity of the church, and a cordial determination to uphold it, which may be received as a pledge, that however they may yet differ as to smaller matters, they are one in their resolution to preserve it in all its efficacy."\*

When the evangelical clergy of the Establishment found themselves countenanced by the moderates who guided the Assembly, and when their own leader, Dr. Andrew Thomson, could make himself feared by his sarcasm, respected by his talents, and admired by his popular gifts as a debater and preacher, they gradually became shyer of acting along with Dissenters, and would scarcely appear with them on a platform, unless they got the leading motions. They did not claim this honour, but they certainly expected it.

The movements going on in civil and religious society were clearly elevating the evangelical party, and they required only to wait and keep upon the top of the wave, and public opinion would float them into the harbour. Joseph Hume and Henry Brougham were not more certainly sapping the Tory majorities in the House of Commons, than Chalmers and Thomson were curtailing the majorities of the moderates, and both the civilians and divines were, in a great measure, gathering strength from the same cause—the diffusion of liberal opinions among the mass of the people.

About this period, 1826, the dominant views of the Church of Scotland broke forth in a very unexpected way, and were probably strengthened by the fierce conflict in which they were speedily involved. The cause in itself was good, and, had it been conducted with anything like Christian temper, would have served an excellent end; but in the violent struggle there appeared a grasping spirit. The more discerning of the Dissenting public saw a throne erecting in Edinburgh, before which they refused to yield obeisance.

The British and Foreign Bible Society, by its fundamental regulation, was to circulate the Holy Scriptures without "note or comment," and the only version it was to circulate in the United Kingdom was to be "the authorized version." When it extended its operations to the continental nations, it also printed and circulated "their authorized versions." These, in general, contained

\* Cook's Life of Hill, p. 210.

the Apocrypha; and, if they were Roman Catholic versions, the Apocrypha was intermingled according to the scriptural canon of the Church of Rome. This violation of the fundamental principle of the society was pointed out and held up to the indignation of the public in the pages of the Christian Instructor. A controversy ensued of the most rancorous kind. At the meeting of the Bible Society, in May, 1826, its president, Lord Teignmouth, announced from the chair, that the society made "a retraction and correction" of the error committed. And for the sake of preventing every mistake, and allaying, for the future, every suspicion, several supplementary regulations about the circulation of the Scriptures without the Apocrypha were adopted.

Instead of terminating the Apocryphal controversy, these regulations only seemed to kindle it up with fresh fury. The Scottish societies, one after another, separated from the parent institution. Edinburgh was the focus from which deputations were sent over the country; and the London committee were branded as men that ought not to be trusted, notwithstanding of their pledges publicly given. In this dispute there was the strange anomaly, that nearly all the Dissenters were on one side, cleaving to the parent institution, and nearly all the churchmen were found on the other voting for separation from London. Careful observers noticed the fact, and declared that there must be some cause operating deeper than what appeared upon the surface. The eyes, at least of some in Glasgow, were first opened at a meeting of the Continental Society to receive a deputation from Edinburgh, who were to give information why the Glasgow Continental Society should break up its connection with its parent society in London. This was at the very hottest of the Apocryphal controversy. Then it was undisguisedly stated, that Scotland was an ancient kingdom, and that, as such, it ought to have its own religious institutions, and that their seat should be in Edinburgh, the ancient capital; and that all the provinces should be connected with it. This was lifting the curtain. No wonder that no explanations from London could satisfy. It is very probable that there was no regular plan formed at the commencement of the Apocryphal controversy of making Edinburgh a rival to London; but, as the disputants cast in their contributions into the burning furnace, they took the shape, and "came out" a dazzling project for the honour of Scotland and the Scottish Establishment. More Church-

men and Dissenters saw "the golden calf" than were willing, in words, to acknowledge it; and without much explanation, they easily ranged themselves on the different sides of separation, or adherence to the parent institution. The dispute has proved most calamitous to Bible circulation. Had it not been that the Dissenters,—Relief, Independents, and especially the Secession,—in the very face of the Church of Scotland, exerted themselves afterwards to get the royal patent for printing the Bible abolished, the monopoly destroyed, and thereby greatly reduced the price of the sacred volume, there would literally have been, to the north of the Tweed, a famine of the word of life. The Apocryphal controversy was the whirlwind that scattered the friends of the Bible, and no attempt has since been made to do anything in Scotland worth recording for diffusing the oracles of truth.

Another subject began, in 1827, to occupy the attention of the English Dissenters, in which the different churches in Scotland also had a considerable interest,—the abrogation of the Corporation and Test acts. The part which the Scotch Establishment acted on the occasion, was felt by their Dissenting brethren to be somewhat unfriendly. So far back as the reign of Charles II., the English Protestant Dissenters, with the view of excluding the Catholics from civil offices, had voluntarily allowed themselves to be excluded from all corporate offices, and from every situation under government, by giving their sanction to the passing of the Corporation and Test acts, by which every person was excluded from every place of civil trust, who did not take the sacrament of the Lord's Supper according to the rites of the Church of England. Papists, under the countenance of James, the apparent heir to the throne, were then worming themselves into the highest situations in the country. The Dissenters waived their claims to exemption, and, with the devotedness of martyrs, sacrificed their civil rights, trusting to the good faith, justice, and humanity of the legislature for a future provision for their relief. The hour of "good faith" was tardy in its approach. The members of the Church of England continued to monopolize all corporate, magisterial, judicial, and public appointments for upwards of 160 years. In vain did the Dissenters plead that these laws were oppressive—a blot upon the Christian religion—a profanation of one of its most sacred institutions. All they could obtain was a mere annual bill of indemnity, which partially set them aside from year to year. Still they were suspended over their head, as if dissent



was a civil crime. The time was considered favourable for their entire revocation.

The Catholics were pressing the legislature for emancipation, and it was evident it could not much longer be delayed. It was acknowledged on all hands that it would be the height of injustice to exempt the Catholics from every civil disability, and yet continue to deny to Dissenters their civil privileges, who, on all occasions, had shown themselves the loyal subjects of the British crown. Lord John Russell moved their repeal. It was at first opposed by Wellington, Peel, and Huskisson; but parliament having given a decided vote in its favour, the ministry yielded, afforded it their countenance, as paving the way for Catholic emancipation, which they were now resolved to grant; and, in 1829, the Bill for the abrogation of the Corporation and Test acts received the royal assent. The Dissenters received the boon with warm religious gratitude. It is somewhat remarkable that, as the Dissenters stripped themselves of their civil rights to exclude the Catholics, the Catholics, literally by their pressure from without, forced them back into the bosom of the state as citizens, before they could open a door for themselves. Indirectly, the Catholic Association repealed the Corporation and Test acts.

The Church of Scotland was deeply interested in the abrogation of these stringent and persecuting laws. Her members "were excluded from holding situations in the British army and navy, and from many civil offices, unless they virtually abjured their religion by partaking of the Lord's Supper, not in the mode which they conscientiously approved of, but agreeably to the practice and ritual of the Church of England."\* This state of matters was sanctioned by the articles of union. Under Sir H. Moncrieff, in 1790, the Assembly condemned this part of the treaty of union, as degrading to the Church of Scotland,—as a gross profanation of the Lord's Supper,—and appointed a committee to get the grievance redressed. Now, alas! things were viewed differently on the north of the Tweed. The Independents, Secession, and Relief, were indeed all zealous for the repeal of the Corporation and Test acts, as being sad encroachments upon religious liberty and the rights of conscience; but the Church of Scotland was cool, and even, in general, was opposed to the measure. A very offensive and insulting pamphlet was

\* Cook's Life of Hill, p. 275.

published by the Rev. Edward Irving, and widely circulated, calling upon the legislature still to keep the Dissenters under the operation of these obnoxious acts, and not to exempt them from civil disabilities, else the judgments of Heaven would fall upon them. The old fraternal spirit, which was wont to subsist between the evangelical portion of the Church of Scotland and the Dissenters, was fast waning away, and a spirit of fierce hostility was appearing in its stead. Mr. Irving was then the mouth-piece of a young fiery section of ultra Churchmen, which had begun to appear in the evangelical side of the Assembly.

On the opening of the Parliamentary Session of 1829, His Majesty, in his speech, recommended to both Houses to consider the whole condition of Ireland,—to review the civil disabilities on His Majesty's Roman Catholic subjects,—and to remove them, if consistent with the permanent peace and security of the country. The ministry felt themselves standing upon a volcano. The Catholic Association paralyzed the government of Ireland. The right of voting for members of parliament, in that country, was in the hands of forty shilling freeholders. Under the controlling influence of the Association and of the priests, they had the power, and they were resolved to exercise it, of returning no members to parliament but emancipators. The sudden death of Canning had dashed the cup of liberty from their lips, when they were expecting to quaff it. O'Connell, returned for Clare, had been pronounced disqualified to sit, and was sent back disgraced for his religion among his excited countrymen. Famine and death were stalking throughout the land. Public credit was shaken. The Bank of Ireland was tottering upon the brink of bankruptcy. Wellington and Peel now saw that the safety of the United Kingdom depended upon granting emancipation. A civil war to put down Popery was worse than madness. The majority of the army were Papists; was it likely they would draw their swords against their Catholic countrymen, and shed the blood of their kinsmen for no cause but their being Catholics? Fearful would have been the responsibility in making a trial of their allegiance to their sovereign on any such point. The cabinet, therefore, came to the conclusion, that the harmony, power, and prosperity of the country depended upon carrying the measure which they had introduced into His Majesty's speech, and they promptly and fearlessly carried the proposal into effect. In his place in the House of Commons, Peel said, "I rise, in the spirit of peace, to

propose the adjustment of the Roman Catholic question,—that question which has so long and so painfully occupied the attention of parliament, and which has distracted the councils of the king for the last thirty years.” In moving the second reading of the Catholic Relief bill, in the House of Lords, Wellington, referring to the opinion of some persons, that the Catholic Association should be put down, and the country quelled by military force, gave expression to the following sentiments, as noble as they are humane:—“ My Lords, I have spent more of my life in *war* than most men, and if I could avoid, even for *one month*, a civil war in a country to which I am attached, I would sacrifice my *life* to do it. There is nothing which destroys the prosperity of a country to such a degree as civil wars,—in which the hand of one man is raised against another,—in which neighbour strikes neighbour,—in which a son is ranged against the father,—the servant betrays his master,—and the whole scene ends in confusion and detestation.”

The bill was carried by overwhelming majorities in both houses of parliament; but the opposition in many quarters without doors was noisy, violent, and pertinacious. A very influential meeting was held in Edinburgh in its favour, when Dr. Chalmers and Mr. (now Lord) Jeffrey spoke courageously and eloquently in its behalf; but the great majority in Scotland were vociferous against it. So confident were its opponents of their power, that they boasted publicly that they would frighten the Duke, as their forefathers had done Lord North in 1779, by their opposition from carrying his intended measure. The ministers of the Independent, Secession, and Relief churches were nearly unanimous for granting emancipation, but not their people. Many of them still clung to their old opinions, and conceived that liberty and religion would perish, if civil disabilities were removed from the Catholics. In such cases, all weapons are usually accounted lawful. The Dissenting ministers were accused at public meetings of being little better than Papists. The jealousies between them and their people were fanned, and the increasing separation between the Church and Dissenting clergy was thereby greatly widened and promoted. The Old Light Burghers and Cameronians, (the latter of whom had, by their Testimony, 1821, so far recognised the government of the country, as to pay “taxes for wrath’s sake,”) were now brought forward, and helped into public notice, because of their notions about Establishments,

and extirpating Popery. The Scotch Dissenting ministers never showed themselves possessed of more sterling principle than on this occasion. At the expense of popularity, and loss of character among their hearers, they prudently but firmly contended for religious liberty, and endeavoured to impress upon their people, who were giving their ears to strangers, that the wounds of Ireland would never be stanchèd till the sword of religious discord was sheathed. Many of the most violent anti-catholic clergy won, by their intemperate zeal against the Papists, a degree of popularity to which they were not entitled, and which afterwards proved very injurious, in stimulating them to wild and sectarian measures on other topics which soon came to be discussed.

It was amid these changes of the ecclesiastical condition of the country, that the seeds of what was afterwards called the Voluntary controversy, were sown, and very speedily took root, and yielded fruit in abundance. When all civil disabilities were withdrawn on account of religion, the question instantly forced itself on the public mind, why should any one sect be salaried by the state, when all are equally good subjects, and stand upon a level in the eye of law? Newspapers and Magazines soon filled their columns with discussions on the point. The friends of Church Establishments, from the very first, saw the assaults to which they would be exposed, and the necessity of having them remodelled and reformed, to meet the new conflicts amid contending sects and parties. The Bishop of London, during the discussions on the Catholic Relief bill, promised that the Protestant Episcopal church would be so reformed, that the superior principles and conduct of the clergy would put her out of all danger from the Catholics, and from all other denominations. The Earl of Winchelsea also sounded the alarm, and declared, that in the altered state of things about to be introduced, the emoluments of the Bishops should be equalized,—their election rendered more open,—that they should cease to occupy seats in the House of Lords, and, henceforward, reside in their dioceses, that their weight and influence with the country might be increased. Discerning men saw that sifting times were coming. A society also was got up in Scotland for the improvement or abolition of patronage. The ‘Church Patronage Reporter’ was started, “to stir up and keep alive an intelligent, devoted, prayerful, and energetic spirit against it, which was not to be allowed to subside till the people were re-invested with their rightful privileges.” Both Establishments be-



gan to devise measures for purifying and popularizing their institutions, that they might maintain their pre-eminence; while Dissenters, having swept away part of their grievances, were now prepared to stand on level ground with them, and to ask why they should be taxed for their support.

In this state of the public mind, and of newspaper warfare, some of the ministers of religion began to handle the question of Establishments in their public discourses, either condemning or defending them according to their judgment. The Independents had always held that they were unscriptural. The Relief ministers had generally maintained the same opinions; and Hutchison's publications were still considered, as when he wrote them, to be a fair exhibition of the mind of the synod upon the topic. The subject had never been discussed at any great length within the Secession. Like most Dissenters, they had seceded from the Establishment on account of its abuses, corruptions, and tyrannical usurpation of the rights of conscience. "Having been directed by a train of events into the right path, they gradually pushed their principles to their legitimate consequences, and began to discern the impropriety of all religious establishments whatever." At the time of the union between the Burghers and Antiburghers, all the leading men on both sides of the Secession were disposed to condemn them, and only a very few still clung to some pure unearthly theoretic model of an Establishment, which would comprise within itself—what is incompatible—a favoured party, and respect to the rights of conscience in others. A few years ripened their general opinions into action.

Mr. Ballantine, of Stonehaven, an esteemed Secession minister, first ventured upon a separate publication, entitled, 'A Comparison of Established and Dissenting Churches,' though the subject had already found access to the pages of the Secession Magazine. It was just the old controversy which had long before been discussed by Glas, Hutchison, and Graham. It now reappeared under a slightly modified aspect. The Popish Relief bill had the merit of striking the fire from the flint in the House of Lords, and the excitement which it produced throughout the country was only the tinder on which it fell. Dr. Marshall, of Kirkintilloch, saw the danger of Papists being not only emancipated, but endowed according to the plan which had often of late been advocated by certain liberal politicians who were fast rising into power. Being

invited, about the time of the passing of the Roman Catholic Relief bill, (1829,) to preach a public sermon in Glasgow, he, as a far-sighted man, descried the common danger, and instead of advocating, as Winchelsea did, a reform of the existing Establishments, he argued powerfully, that the total removal of all civil establishments of religion whatever was the only effectual means of securing "public tranquillity, political and religious." The public mind being in an excited state, and prepared for receiving such discussions, his ideas were eagerly embraced, and as the inquiry was in a great measure new to many of the Seceders, and held out a rational project for keeping Papists in their own place, which Seceders had always eagerly contended for, it was to them a flood of new and grateful light.

The friends of the Establishment did not relish such a radical ecclesiastical reform; many timid politicians saw in it the overthrow of all the institutions of the country, and therefore, a very large portion of the community, which still continued to swell in numbers and strength, demanded reformation of church abuses as all that was necessary. Meetings for this purpose were held by the Protestants in Ireland. Petitions were presented to parliament. Lord Mountcashel, in the spring of 1830, moved, in his place in the House of Lords: "That an humble address be presented to His Majesty, praying that he would be graciously pleased to appoint a commission to inquire into, and state if any, and what, abuses exist in the Church Establishments of England and Ireland, and if any, to report the measures most expedient for the removal thereof." In high places there were thus some who acknowledged that church reform was needed, and who had fortitude to propose it, though their proposals dropped still-born upon the aristocracy of the land. Silence was deemed the best policy, where a debate might have elicited some ugly facts. A single stone, however, will break the scum upon the surface of the dull pestiferous pool.

In the midst of these movements and controversies, the Church of Scotland was throwing herself far more than formerly upon the religious sympathies of the people. Her evangelical ministers were now, in a great measure, from the disputes about the Bible Society, the abrogation of the Test act, and the passing of the Catholic Relief bill, dissociated from the Dissenters, amalgamated with the moderates, and both parties were taking joint measures for promoting the interest of their church in India, and throughout

Scotland. In their eager desire to monopolize public favour, and to keep that hold of the feelings of the popular mind which they had got by stoutly and violently opposing Catholic emancipation, the party of young, warm, and impassioned ministers already noticed, which had sprung up among them, continued to augment in number and fervour. They were *ultras* in religious sentiments,—they revelled amid excitement, and addressed themselves much to the feelings. Their system was a species of sentimentalism and orthodoxy blended together, which they had rapidly caught in their burning zeal to be evangelical and popular, without studying theology as a system or science. Their characteristic feature first appeared under the assumption of “assurance of faith.” Every one who believed in Jesus was held by them to be conscious of his having passed from death to life. Without making sufficient allowance for the deceitfulness of their own hearts, or the influence of mere mental excitement, or pride, or vanity, upon the decisions of the judgment, they held that this high and full assurance of faith was of the essence of faith, and necessary to salvation. This was followed by broaching the doctrines of universal redemption, and that all were already pardoned. A person required, according to them, only to believe that he was pardoned, and he was safe and happy. As the watering-places are just the spots for nursing fanaticism and sentimentality, because the visitors have nothing to occupy their attention, the young ministers about Helensburgh, under the teaching of Thomas Erskine, Esq., who was thrown in among them, caught the rising fervour, and became enamoured of a religion so much adapted to the warm luxurious feelings of a lady’s drawing-room. The Rev. John M’Leod Campbell of Row, on the Gairloch, in which parish is the sea-coast town of Helensburgh, was only two years placed in his charge when he was inoculated with the new and lively sentiments which were pervading the fashionable circles on the frith of the Clyde; and from him the heresy was called the Gairloch heresy, though there were others that went nearly as far as he did, but they were more careful to explain phrases, and to keep open to themselves a retreat within the sober bounds of orthodoxy. The whole district, round by Port-Glasgow, Greenock, Largs, Roseneath, and Helensburgh, was commoved, and the new views were soon extended to Glasgow and Edinburgh, where they met with many favourers among those who were affluent in their circumstances,

and their female servants; but they never made any progress among clear-headed, thinking Scotchmen, who had to gain their bread by the sweat of their brow. Men with horny hands disliked the midnight excitement of their meetings, as being foreign from the common sense religion of the Bible, which is suited to man as an active, rational, and industrious being, and who has to think and work as well as feel.

Error and fanaticism, like disease breaking out in different places at once, are symptomatic of public feeling in the general associated body. The Rev. Edward Irving, of London, with some modifications, began, much about the same time, to advocate kindred opinions, and thereby operated *upon* the Scotch Rowites, and was operated upon by them in return. There was a fellowship of feeling between them. His popularity in London, whither he had gone from being the assistant of Dr. Chalmers, was at first exceedingly great; and when it began to wane, he separated himself from the evangelical Dissenters, began to build up "the Scotch church" in the metropolis, and preached with great arrogance, as if he only knew the truth. He introduced the doctrine of universal forgiveness, which required merely to be believed to be enjoyed, and which was the favourite dogma in Scotland, under a modification which gratified his wish for originality, but which was far more dangerous, and which sapped the very foundations of the Christian system. He seemed to teach—for he often spoke enigmatically, saying and unsaying the same things in the same sentence—that the human nature of the Son of man, which was inhabited by the Son of God, was corrupt and peccable,—that a moral warfare was carried on in the person of Christ between his human and divine nature, the one tempting to sin, and the other resisting and repelling every sinful suggestion; so that, at last, all corruption, by the power of the Godhead, was destroyed within him. This Christ did in his own person, to show that he had power, and was willing, to do the same to every man. In this way Mr. Irving set aside altogether the satisfaction of Christ to divine justice, and resolved his mediation into a simple process of sanctification. According to him, God was reconciled to all, as he was pledged to do for every man what he had done in regard to the corrupt humanity of Christ; and farther, that all might be as holy as Christ was holy.

Many were shocked and alarmed at doctrines which set aside the sacrifice of Christ for sin, and which denied that the Holy



Ghost had sanctified Christ's human nature from the womb; but his strong appeals to the feelings, and the vaunted simplicity and benevolence of the new opinions, collected and kept around him a large class of imaginative professors, who delighted to have their passions intoxicated rather than their judgment enlightened.

He also declared that Christ would appear personally to regenerate the world,—that it would be in a few years,—that awful judgments would be poured out upon the earth,—and that they were all to be waiting for his coming. He thus kept them on the tiptoe of expectation, and their fancy was stretched to the utmost in picturing out to themselves what should take place, and the honour to which they should be raised, when Christ should appear. On this latter point the followers of Campbell and of Irving were agreed, and the most extravagant expressions were used by some of them as to the event.

When persons once get into the belief of notions bordering upon fanaticism, they speedily diverge farther and farther into the region of fancy and feeling. In the different towns on the vale of the Clyde a very extravagant spirit soon began to manifest itself. The impression was cherished, that Christ would not only come personally, but that miraculous gifts would be revived in the church, and that they would visit with him the Land of Palestine, where he was expected to set up his throne. The restoration of miraculous gifts to the church was eagerly longed for, and made the subject of prayer. An impassioned wish is apt to frame its own answer. Speedily Miss Mary Campbell of Fernicarnie, near Row, began to write or scratch certain words on paper, which were supposed to be an unknown language. The M'Donalds of Port-Glasgow began also to speak in an unknown tongue, and persons in Greenock, in the name of the Lord Jesus, commanded the sick to rise and walk. The religious feeling in the whole district was in a state of the most unhealthy action. Prudent persons with their families left the coast. Their place was soon supplied by the warm and imaginative. Churches were shaken, and had it not been that extravagance soon became something like madness, and the miracle-workers found it was one thing to command a nervous person to rise and walk, and another thing to awake the dead by the prayer of faith—which they madly attempted, to their own confusion—the delusion might have spread to an amazing extent. Mrs. Buchan's doctrine, that it was a want of faith that prevented the coming of Christ and

the working of miracles, was again revived. There is a kindred spirit among all fanatics.

The news of these things were quickly reported in London, and, losing nothing by the distance over which they travelled, they produced great joy in Regent-square. When some of the gifted disciples, who went up from Scotland, appeared in Mr. Irving's church, the wild fire caught hold of the minds of his people prepared for ignition, and they speedily outshone their northern friends. The gift of tongues was not conveyed according to the apostolic method by the laying on of hands, but the gifted person felt himself moved, and then "the tongue burst forth with an astonishing and terrible crash of loud, rapid vociferation." This continued for a little, and then the tongue passed into English, and proclaimed, in the style of Irving, either the coming of the Lord, or judgments upon Britain. It is very remarkable that neither Campbell nor Irving, nor any of their clerical followers, ever laid claim to the gift of tongues, or the power of working miracles, though they suspended their discourses when the tongue was speaking, stood with uplifted eyes, and then gave thanks for the revelation. The number of persons who laid claim to the gift among the laity, male and female, was very considerable; but in proportion to their number was the danger of the breaking up of the system, for they began to accuse each other of speaking by a lying spirit; and some recanting and publishing their recantations, the religious public saw clearly that it was all a delusion.

If the Church of Scotland did not intend to disgrace herself, and lose that popularity which she wished to retain, she was compelled to exert her authority against those who, with their half-formed notions and extravagant opinions, were producing disturbance throughout all her borders. Accordingly, prosecutions for heresy were instituted at different times against them, and in the course of a few years, Messrs. Campbell of Row, Tait of Edinburgh, and Dow of Tongland, were extruded from the church for holding the doctrines of the Row heresy; while Messrs. Irving, McLean, Scott, and Crosbie, were separated from her for holding what has been called Irvingism. Nothing was ever insinuated against their moral character. Their piety was warm; they were considered sincere; they caught the heat and sectarian opinions which others had generated, and, in striving to be evangelical and popular without sufficient study, they wrecked themselves, and in

part damaged that church which they were zealous above all things, at the commencement of their ministry, to exalt. In denouncing dissenters, they became dissenters themselves.

Towards the close of their career they did not even produce the noise, and draw towards themselves that public attention which might have been expected. Great national events were coming like wave upon wave; and during the years, from 1829 till 1833, when they were before the church courts, these national events swallowed up every other topic, and the forming of new religious denominations amid the foaming surge of political changes was next to impossible.

The death of Irving, also, and his kind of half-recantation on his death-bed at Glasgow in 1834, sadly discomfited his followers. Though Mr. Henry Drummond of Aldbury, and other wealthy persons about London, set up several churches, and constituted a form of worship borrowed in its office-bearers, &c. from the temple service, yet it soon began to show symptoms of decay. Mr. Campbell got a chapel built in Glasgow, and Mr. Tait formed a meeting in Edinburgh; but they put no life into their system, and speedily ceased to be followed by crowds. Their track became as trackless as the path of the vessel upon the surface of the deep.

At the very time when the Church of Scotland began to summon them before her courts, and pass sentence upon them for their errors, the events which led to the passing of the Reform bill were closing in upon the councils of the nation. Lord Liverpool had been struck with apoplexy in 1827, by which the key-stone of toryism had fallen from its place. Canning had succeeded as prime minister. Peel and Wellington resigned, and would not act with him. The Duke of Clarence, and a portion of the whigs, had come to his aid. After four months of broiling warfare with his old associates, who were now his envenomed opponents, the glowing genius of Canning expired, and the grave received him into its resting-place. Wellington became prime minister, and, as already related, bestowed political freedom upon both Dissenters and Catholics. Religious animosities among the adherents of the Establishment were cooled down, which was produced, to a considerable extent, by that fear which began to seize upon them, lest they should be swamped. The effects of such great organic changes were just beginning to manifest themselves when George IV., in 1830, died. William IV. ascended the

throne. Great distress had been for a time prevailing both among the agricultural and manufacturing classes. These recurring distresses had become of late so frequent, that the public were impatient under them, and demanded parliamentary reform as the only remedy to strike at the root of the evil. They would have been satisfied with the transference of the elective franchise from a few of the small corrupt boroughs, which had become all but extinct, to a few of the large commercial or manufacturing towns, which had, in modern times, sprung into existence. The Duke of Wellington saw the danger of touching the old rotten fabric, and therefore he took the earliest opportunity of declaring in his place, at the opening of the session in November, 1830, that the system of representation was all but perfect, and that he would oppose every species of parliamentary reform. The declaration was more courageous than discreet. He was standing upon a volcano, and his futile attempt to repress its heavings made it burst beneath his feet, and heave him from his lofty position.

The courage of the British lion had been roused by the events which had lately taken place in several neighbouring continental nations. France, during the three days of July 27th, 28th, 29th, 1830, had fought, and bled, and triumphed in the streets of Paris. Charles and his tyrannical advisers were fugitives and vagabonds on the face of the earth. The legitimacy and divine right of kings were set aside by the French: the throne had been declared vacant: a bill of rights had been adopted: the Duke of Orleans had sworn to maintain it, and had been called to the throne. Henceforth there was to be no exclusive religious creed in France, and Protestants and Catholics were to be the same in the eye of law, and receive the same state support. The Belgians also had shaken off the authority of their Dutch king, palmed upon them by the allied sovereigns, beaten the troops that were sent to repress their rebellion, and appointed for themselves a provisional government. England had caught the spirit-stirring project of reform, which was now discussed in every newspaper. Birmingham had formed, in the very centre of the masses, a political union, and 3,400 persons had kept a festival in furtherance of the measure. The whole country responded to the sentiments which were uttered, and determination gathered upon every brow to obtain the long-wished-for boon. William was believed to be in favour of breaking up the power of the boroughmongers, who scrupled not to set their feet upon the crown itself. From a personal quarrel when Lord-



high-admiral, with Wellington, he was perfectly ready to part with his services. The declaration of the hero of a hundred battles was hurled back upon himself with a violence which made him reel in his place, and quail before public opinion. His ministry went down. Earl Grey became premier, pledged to the principles of retrenchment, parliamentary reform, and the improvement of all the existing laws and institutions of the country. The plan of parliamentary reform was introduced March, 1831, into the House of Commons, and the Reform bill, after having received every kind of opposition which power, wealth, eloquence, and ingenuity could bring to bear against it,—after Earl Grey had been driven from office, and borne back on the shoulders of public opinion,—the nation also being brought several times to the verge of bankruptcy and rebellion, at length obtained the royal assent, 7th June, 1832, and became the law of the land. On the passing of this bill the nation was ~~literally dissolved~~ in joy.

The obstructions which had been made to its passing chiefly sprung from the aristocracy, the bishops, and the Established clergy. The bishops were hustled and insulted in the discharge of their ministerial duties. The nation rang with clamour against them for sitting as priests in the House of Lords—since the kingdom of Christ was not of this world. Indignation against state-paid priests was universal. Men of all denominations advocated the principle, that as all parties had now the same civil rights, it was unjust and absurd to tax all to pay one party, and that party, too, the one most unfriendly to the reformation of all national abuses. Even Earl Grey, with all his blandness and reverence for rank, warned the bishops of their insane opposition, and called upon them “to put their own House in order.” The Dissenters were again the favourites with the nation.

The Church of Scotland, in the meantime, did not fail to turn the many processes which she was carrying on against heretics, and her ejection of them from their parishes, to good account. She proclaimed herself lustily as a reforming church, so that the people might now expect from her a pure and faithful dispensation of religious ordinances; and that it was unwise to talk of putting down the Establishment, when she was just beginning to show herself worthy of her trust. The storm without made her ministers act with more unanimity within. She never for a moment lost sight of the plans which she had been

taking before the Reform bill was introduced, of lengthening her cords, and strengthening her stakes. The Church of England having got a grant of public money for building new parish churches, and the Church of Scotland having got the same for the Highlands, a committee, in 1829, had taken their measures in connection with different presbyteries and synods for providing additional church accommodation for the Lowlands. In their representations prepared for government, the accommodation provided by the Dissenters was carefully concealed. The Barony parish of Glasgow was stated to have between 60,000 and 70,000 inhabitants, while yet it had only accommodation for 5,000; and they defended their statement on the ground that government was bound to provide for all the people, without paying any attention to what was done by Dissenters. This was considered insulting and unfair towards those whom, till of late, they had recognised as ministers of Christ, and with whom they had carried on religious and benevolent societies as brethren. The breach was now widening; and this representation was a clear intimation that they intended their extinction, and were resolved, if they could obtain government aid, to build them out of existence.

These things were evident to any person of ordinary discernment before the Reform bill was passed, or the voluntary associations had sprung into existence, and, therefore, in a sermon which the writer of these pages as Moderator of the Relief synod preached, on the terms of Christian communion, before that court in 1831, he said, "I speak it advisedly when I say, that, of late years, a liberal spirit has not been gaining ground in this part of the isle. The church established by law is evidently drawing off from Dissenters, and Dissenters are drawing off from each other. The breaking up of the religious societies formed upon liberal and comprehensive principles, is ominous to those who can read the signs of the times. Missionary Societies are, every successive year, conducted with more and more of a sectarian spirit. Into nearly the whole of the Presbyterian pulpits in Scotland, a Presbyterian minister, belonging to a different denomination, will now no more receive admittance, to preach and plead for a missionary object, during what are called *canonical* hours, than he would be allowed to enter the mosque of Omar. If deputations are not carefully selected from this or that denomination, they will only get evening sermons to preach. The same exclusive and

sectarian temper is appearing in various places, and in a vast variety of ways. Parties have taken the alarm, lest, in this liberal age, their extinction, as parties, should be at hand. But, though the tide of generous feeling is ebbing, and though it will, in all probability, ebb farther and farther, and bring us almost back to the illiberal period previous to the formation of the Bible and Missionary Societies, yet still I have no fear for the result. The swell of the coming wave will just be the more powerful; and the influx of the mighty waters, urged on by the favouring breath of an enlightened people, shall yet sweep away all those mounds which a bigoted priesthood, trembling for their tithes, and their party distinctions, are at present attempting to raise.”\*

The first decided triumph of the popular party over the moderates was obtained at the meeting of Assembly in 1831, when Mr. Bell, a whig, was chosen as procurator for the church, to fill up the vacancy occasioned by the death of Sir John Connel. The moderates divided their votes between Messrs. Whigham and Grant, while the popular party kept united on Mr. Bell. There was perhaps a little manœuvring in the matter. Earl Grey was now premier. He was pledged to “the measure of reform.” The king was fond of being popular. Liberal politics were in the ascendant, and to have a procurator who would be in the confidence of a reform ministry was a very good stroke of policy. If the moderates merely preferred their personal attachments to their principles, and thereby insanely divided their strength, they were soon made to reap the bitter fruit of division, and to see their long-cherished ecclesiastical principles trampled in the dust. Nothing very decisive took place in 1832. The principle, which was afterwards fashioned into the veto law, just began that year to be mooted; and the church showed faint symptoms of casting herself upon the sympathies of the people, which the Reform bill and the voluntary controversy,—a mere *pendicle* of the great national measure of reform, brought next year into lively and vigorous operation.

\* ‘Scriptural Terms of Communion,’ pp. 26, 27. By the Rev. Gavin Struthers. Glasgow: 1831.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

THE REFORM BILL—ITS INFLUENCE UPON RELIGIOUS PARTIES—VETO  
LAW—ENDOWMENTS—DUMFRIES RELIEF CHURCH PROCESS.

THE passing of the Reform bill in 1832 produced a considerable change in the institutions of the country. It threatened more, indeed, than it has hitherto accomplished, for the checks in the registration courts, which have retarded its influence, could not at first be discovered. Monopolies of all kinds, ecclesiastical, civil, and commercial, were now understood to have their days numbered. The elective franchise being apparently lodged in the middle ranks of society, it was never doubted but that they would always return men to parliament pledged for the general weal. It would, henceforward, not be class legislation. The interests of the people at large would be consulted. Amid these anticipations, the Dissenters thought they saw the dawn of that period, when the injustice of salarizing one sect at the expense of the rest would be repudiated by the people; and the Establishment also saw the necessity of getting within its pale the great bulk of the population of the country; otherwise, if it became a minority, it would speedily be curtailed, or deprived of the special countenance of the state. This state of feeling, which was produced and strengthened by the measures of "a Reform government," gave fresh life and body to the discussions about Establishments, which had hitherto been mainly confined to newspapers, magazines, sermons, and fugitive pamphlets. But for the Reform bill, the controversy, as noticed already, would probably soon have fallen asleep, as it did at the period of the French revolution. The state of the nation was now different, and that made a very material difference. Leaders were accordingly raised up, both on the one side and the other, who were defamed or praised by their opponents or friends; yet still, to one that looked deeper



than the surface, it was the mighty swell in the public mind, rather than their own choice, which cast them upon the crest of the agitated billows.

To understand the circumstances which were shaping and controlling the national mind at the period when the contest between the Church and Dissent was at its height, it is necessary to bear in mind that in the beginning of 1832, combination was doing much for carrying the Reform bill in a peaceful and triumphant manner; and popular feeling was running high against the Established churches for attempting to keep back the measure. Every reformer, whatever his religious connection, declared that if Establishments were now to be set up, they would certainly never have a place in the nation. Some said they must be reformed, while others denounced them as a blot upon the nineteenth century. A persuasion was very generally entertained, that if proper means were used, and a combined effort made to enlighten the public mind, all parties would speedily be brought to perceive that civil establishments of religion were unscriptural, unjust, and impolitic; and that they were as much opposed to the express appointment of Christ, the Head of his church, as they were injurious to the civil rights of men.

In these circumstances, a few of the most active ministers connected with the Secession church, originated a kind of preliminary meeting early in 1832, to consult what should be done to keep alive the interest which had been created about the voluntary support of the gospel. In the course of the spring and summer of that year, the Reform bill was discussed and passed. The nation, throughout the three kingdoms, was now demanding ecclesiastical reform, with a voice which could not be misunderstood. The separation between the Dissenters and churchmen became greater than ever. The church stood in frowning majesty, breathing defiance against those who would venture to touch such a venerable institution. Appearances, however, seemed favourable for getting a fair revisal and full amendment of the ecclesiastical condition of the nation, which, it must be confessed, was rather the patchwork of times and circumstances, than modelled according to a scriptural platform, or the condition of a great, free, and enlightened nation, in which there existed an immense multitude of sects and parties. Voluntary associations, therefore, began to be formed in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Paisley, &c., in the close of 1832 and beginning of 1833, for the purpose of bringing back the

church to the original appointment of Christ, and leaving Christianity to the generous support of its friends, and the favour of its divine Author.

All the Dissenters did not approve of this movement. Several of them thought that the step was rash, and that it would give a sectarian aspect to a great question which ought to be carried by general discussion in newspapers and magazines, and adopted by universal consent. It was feared that the power of the press, which had hitherto done so much for it, would be paralyzed, and churchmen, who had taken in, and read those papers which were favourable to the measure, would now give them up when the warfare assumed the aspect of dissent, or church. The great majority, however, were convinced that the public mind would not go back on this great question, and, that as they sincerely sought no evil to religion, but its benefit, the combined wisdom, zeal, and power of societies, regularly formed, were the best instruments for working out successfully a great principle, and securing full religious liberty as a constitutional right. Their counsel was considered sound. They were men of great foresight who chalked out the course, and they have certainly been instrumental in doing much good. It is only beginning to develop itself. They have been the instrument of diffusing the voluntary principle to a great extent among the Roman Catholics in Ireland, and thus have kept them back from asking state endowments, which, if they had but asked, there is every reason to believe, government would have promptly given. They have made the proper position of the church of Christ, to the governments of this world, a subject of grave and talented discussion. This for ages had puzzled all the governments of Europe, and is only now beginning to be understood. The Church also has obtained a new view of her spiritual constitution.

When the General Assembly met in 1833, the Reform bill was the law of the land. Voluntary associations were spreading throughout the country,—the demand for Church reform was exceedingly loud,—numerous overtures were laid on their table for the abrogation of the law of patronage, and the necessity of doing something to popularize the Establishment was now acknowledged by many of its leading members. The more cautious trembled to begin to legislate amid the burst of excitement which the Reform bill had produced; but the court could neither quell nor withstand the impulse coming in upon them from without.

The people having obtained the right to elect their parliamentary representatives, now demanded the right to elect their ministers, who were to officiate in their parish churches. During the spring session of parliament, 56,000 of the people of Scotland had petitioned for a repeal of the law of patronage, and 20,000 for dis severing the connection between church and state ; so that the public mind was rolling on in a perfect flood-tide upon the ecclesiastical courts. The scheme which it was attempted to carry, was a kind of compromise between the patrons and people, the clergy standing on the centre of the beam, and causing either the one end or other to dip or rise according as they quietly moved their foot. The patron was still to have the right of presenting to the benefice. The people were to have the right of objecting to the presentee, with or *without* assigning any reasons for rejecting him, and the presbytery were to sit as judges on the matter, examining, on the one hand, if there was a malicious combination formed against the presentee, and on the other, if he was qualified for the particular parish, and, according to their judgment, the ordination was either to be arrested or to proceed. The real power was thus to be engrossed by the clergy, and the two other parties were little else than puppets.

The measure which sprang from the overtures presented, was brought before the Assembly by the Rev. Dr. William Thomson of Perth, and one of his main arguments let out partially some of the secrets of the new legislation. "Certain of the Seceding ministers," said he, "have recently taken up a new position towards the Established church, and avowed a determined resolution to attempt its overthrow. At the present moment they are, in pursuance of that resolution, adopting and carrying into effect measures which I cannot reconcile with those professions of devotedness to the spirituality of their functions, to which they lay claim with no small measure of confidence. Sir, I cannot, knowing what I do know of their transactions—I cannot give them, at least a great body of them, credit for purity of principle, and purity of motive in what they are doing. They know well—for they are cunning in their generation, and foreseeing too—they know well the effect which such a measure, as what is projected by the authors of these overtures, will have on the Presbyterian population of Scotland—that it will endear to them their mother church—that it will bring back many of those who, upon principle, have become Seceders. They know that, and they know also the

effect which must be produced on their pecuniary resources, which I believe in many quarters are already in a state of considerable decay. And nothing, I am certain, therefore, in this day's transactions of the General Assembly, will disappoint them more than the adoption of a measure to *prevent effectually the intrusion of ministers into parishes*; and just because nothing which we can do will more effectually prevent that disaffection of the people which they do not fail to improve. It is by means of violent settlements that they can expect to increase their funds and their influence. Let us then adopt the measure which will effectually prevent all such settlements, and their plea with the people must lose its influence in all time coming."\* The measure thus ~~pled~~ for was lost by a small majority of twelve, which in reality was a step to a triumphant victory, when it should be next debated.

Before the Assembly rose, the movement party managed to make an opening for flooding the Assembly, and the moderates, as if unwilling to be outdone in popular measures, actually did themselves what proved their own destruction at next meeting of Assembly. To consolidate the church against the attacks of its assailants, the Assembly agreed to hear counsel, in the year 1834, as to the propriety and legality of admitting ministers of chapels-of-ease to be members of church courts, having sessions, and exercising discipline like other clergymen in their congregation. Hitherto, they could dispense ordinances, but they could not rule in the church. The moderates perceiving this measure carried, by the desertion of some of their friends, brought in an act for assigning to the ministers of the parliamentary churches in the Highlands, *quoad sacra* parishes, and for authorizing them to discharge all the functions competent for an Established minister. They laid themselves prostrate by this enactment, and placed with their own hands a convenient steppingstone, by which the chapel-of-ease ministers might mount into the high places of the church.

During the summer of 1833, and the spring of 1834, the ranks of the reformers were still unbroken, and the public mind was impatient that reform should be carried into every department of the church, as well as of the state. A bill for the reform of the Irish Episcopal church had become law. Its supernumerary bishops were dismissed. Its surplus revenues were next to be devoted to a gen-

\* Report of the Debate on the Overtures anent Calls, p. 7. 1833.



eral system of education. The English universities were expected to be thrown open to Dissenters as national institutions. Church rates were to cease. The Church of Scotland was again to become the church of the people. It is difficult even to recall all the fair dreams, for they proved little better, which floated before the popular imagination. The leading Whigs at the bar were now the leaders of the movement party within the Assembly. The reform ministry devolved the care and reformation of the Scotch church upon them, and they were not slack in attending to its interests. In the month of February, "A select committee of the House of Commons was appointed to consider the past and present state of the law of church patronage, and to inquire how far that system is in accordance with the constitution and principles of the Church of Scotland, and conducive to its usefulness and prosperity." The committee instantly sat down in London, and examined a great number of witnesses. They were most careful, however, to examine none but those who were favourable to the existence of an Established church. No one was examined from the United Secession, Relief, Independent, or Baptist churches. A respectable minister of the United Secession church was indeed summoned, but before the time when he was required to appear, they dispensed with his attendance and evidence. Such a one-sided committee was evidently intended to serve a sectarian purpose, and accordingly, when their report was ordered to be printed, it was found to maintain a dead silence about patronage being either "in accordance" with, or "contrary" to, the constitution and principles of the Church of Scotland; while it closed with a warm recommendation on a subject upon which they were not called to report, and on which they were not in a position to give an opinion, as they had not examined any voluntary ministers who had made the allegations against which they delivered their oracular decision:—"Your committee most earnestly recommend to the legislature, the defence and preservation of an Establishment, with the permanence of which, in their judgment, the general prosperity and general welfare of Scotland may be considered as intimately interwoven." From the government of Earl Grey, conducted in Scotland by Lords Moncrieff, Murray, and Jeffrey, the reforming portion of the Church of Scotland had everything to expect, and nothing to fear. The Voluntaries were perfectly aware of the fact, that government would rather incorporate the Dissenters with the church, than dissolve the connection between church and state. They

therefore memorialized the premier, sent a petition to parliament from Glasgow, signed, in ten days, by forty-nine thousand, and appointed a deputation to wait upon Earl Grey, and state their sentiments, and disabuse his mind of those prejudices under which he seemed to be labouring, as to the number, influence, and grievances of Dissenters. London became the focus of ecclesiastical representations.

During this period of public excitement, the Relief synod was comparatively calm. At its meeting in 1833, it was entirely occupied with the improvement of its Psalmody,—the institution of a Home Mission to preach the gospel in the destitute parts of the country,—the furtherance of the labours of the committee, which was to write the history of the body, and other routine and necessary business. It did not thrust itself forward in any political affair. Its equanimity was even little, if anything, disturbed at its meeting in May 1834. At this meeting, an overture was brought up by the presbytery of Dysart, “that the synod should take such steps as may lead to a friendly intercourse with the United Secession body, as a sister church, with a view ultimately to a union.” This measure had been in contemplation for several years, and had rather been retarded than accelerated by the measure of parliamentary reform. In 1831, the writer of this history had, by request of some friends, preached at the opening of synod upon ‘Relief Terms of Communion,’ for the purpose of giving the Secession church a correct notion of what they were, as there seemed to be a false impression abroad upon the subject. The sermon was printed by request of synod for this very purpose. The synod was therefore expecting, year after year, an overture on union with the Secession. The spirit of the overture presented was approved of, and it was unanimously agreed, according to the ordinary rules of business, to take it up, and discuss it at next meeting of synod.

In the meantime, the question of incorporating the Relief church with the Establishment was broached in the pages of the Instructor. It was proposed “to receive them and other dissenting chapels, whose ministers and elders were willing to accept of the boon, into the Establishment, and to make application to government for an annual grant of money to augment their stipends, so that there might be none below £100. It was conceived that there could be no valid reason—considering the cause of their dissent, ‘Patronage’—why they should reject it.” The

lure was not grasped at. It showed, however, what was desired by some scheming churchmen.

The popular section of the Assembly had taken every means to get the House filled with their friends at its meeting in 1834. The countenance and patronage of government were all in their favour. The spirit of reform operated, to a considerable extent, upon the kind of elders returned by the boroughs. The ministers of the parliamentary churches were an adverse element against the moderates, as they were all expectants of preferment. In making up the roll, the popular party being the majority, they, without much ceremony, had kept some of the moderates from taking their seat. The combination of circumstances on their behalf, within the court, was most propitious; while the clamour of the Voluntaries without drove all the members of Assembly close together, made them forget differences, and act as one man. Lord Moncrieff became leader for the time of the court, and brought forward a motion nearly the same as that which last year had been proposed. His lordship was a judge—the echo it was understood of the administration, honoured for the sake of his father—and well-skilled by repute in ecclesiastical law. And thus he had many recommendations to give weight to his opinions, when he solemnly propounded his measure, and staked his reputation on the fact that it was as agreeable to the original constitution of the church, as it was to the law of the land. Men easily believe what they wish to be true. It has since oozed out, that the present Lord Cockburn, then one of the legal advisers for Scotland, also countenanced the Assembly, in taking the perilous step which they ventured to take. Drs. Mearns and Cook, the Lord Justice Clerk, the Dean of Faculty, (Hope,) warned the Assembly that they were about to make an infringement on the civil rights of patrons, which could not be carried into effect without an act of the legislature,—that the law knew of no power in the heads of families to veto the presen-tee,—that it would bring the church into collision with the state,—that it would not satisfy the mass of the people,—that it would alienate the higher orders from the church,—and that it was impossible not to entertain the idea, that in the whole business they were contemplating the increase of their own power. After a long debate, the Assembly came to a vote, when the following enactment was carried by a majority of forty-six, amid the most exuberant joy of its supporters and adherents :

“EDINBURGH, *May 31st*, 1834.—The General Assembly declare, that it is a fundamental law of this church, that no pastor shall be intruded on any congregation contrary to the will of the people; and, in order that this principle may be carried into full effect, the General Assembly, with the consent of a majority of the presbyteries of this church, do declare, enact, and ordain, That it shall be an instruction to presbyteries, that if, at the moderating in a Call to a vacant pastoral charge, the major part of the male heads of families, members of the vacant congregation, and in full communion with the church, shall disapprove of the person in whose favour the Call is proposed to be moderated in, such disapproval shall be deemed sufficient ground for the presbytery rejecting such person, and that he shall be rejected accordingly, and due notice thereof forthwith given to all concerned; but that, if the major part of the said heads of families shall not disapprove of such person to be their pastor, the presbytery shall proceed with the settlement according to the rules of the church: And farther declare, that no person shall be held to be entitled to disapprove as aforesaid, who shall refuse, if required, solemnly to declare, in presence of the presbytery, that he is actuated by no factious or malicious motive, but solely by a conscientious regard to the spiritual interests of himself or the congregation.

“The General Assembly agree to transmit the above overture to presbyteries for their opinion, and, without a vote, convert the same into an Interim Act.”

The persons who voted for Lord Moncrieff's motion were henceforward called *non-intrusionists*. The motion being on the spot formed into an interim act, was ever after styled the *veto* act. The old dominant party in the church was now considered to be all but annihilated. The non-intrusionists, however, to strengthen their hands, to guard against any speedy reaction of public opinion, and to carry out their popular plans, proceeded at a subsequent sederunt to receive chapel-of-ease ministers as ministers of the Established Church of Scotland, and, by a declaratory act, at once to give them a place in their church courts. Dr. Cook maintained it was not in the power of the Assembly to place chapels on the same footing as parish churches, as the whole system of parish arrangements was the effect of civil legislation. Besides, it was contrary to the constitution of the church itself, to make such a change by a declaratory law. In a struggle



for victory, men do not palter about forms. Might then is often right. Had the veto act not been made an interim law till it had been confirmed by presbyteries, and had the chapel ministers not been placed in church courts, to vote in presbyteries during 1834, and thereby entirely to change the complexion of the representatives for next Assembly, the non-intrusionists would, in all probability, have had a very short reign; for the sovereign and his court were running their last sands of Reform, and ere the meeting of Assembly in 1835, the king had given unequivocal intimations that henceforward he wished "the drag put upon the wheel," and that things in church and state should continue as they were.

Both parties in the Assembly, during the carrying of these measures, spoke very disparagingly of the Dissenters. If Dr. Chalmers, as the leader of the one section, declared "that the Dissenting bodies, retaining the form of sound words, have become spiritually dead; or, if they still own any fire and fervour at all, it is but the fervour of earthly passions,—the fire of fierce and unhallowed politics,"—Dr. Cook, on the other hand, denounced "the Dissenting ministers of Scotland as political agitators, who had become a public nuisance which no government could long tolerate," and whom the non-intrusionists, under their new law, would soon learn to imitate. Whatever the Dissenters, who had their faults, owe to their charity, they at least owe something to their honesty, and that they were not kept in ignorance, that it would be flying from the lion to the bear, and from the bear to the lion, whichever party had the pre-eminence.

Seldom have a party made such shipwreck of their newly acquired power as did the non-intrusionists. They had the opportunity of throwing oil upon the troubled waves of Scotland. Principle, as well as policy, required it of them, and yet they did the very reverse of what they should have done, and homologated one of those very acts for which they had long blamed the moderate party. They had testified for upwards of thirty years against the moderates for passing the act of 1799, by which every evangelical minister of any other denomination had been disqualified for preaching within the pale of the Establishment. They held that this was making the Church of Scotland a sectarian church, and that it was putting an end to the communion of all true believers, which was clearly taught in the scriptures and Confession of Faith. In practice, they had also for many years carried on religious societies with Dissenters, as brethren in the ministry. Now was

the time to show themselves great and generous,—to repeal this act, and to declare dissenting evangelical churches sister churches. It would have put violent Dissenters into a false position, and won a meed of praise from all parties in the land. Instead of this, they drew the lines of circumvallation round the Establishment closer than ever; elevated the “Establishment principle” into a term of communion; ranked Voluntaries with infidels, Socinians, and Papists, and took measures to crush them, and build them down, unless they would consent to come within the pale of the Church of Scotland. Allowing that the Dissenters were too political, they had a noble opportunity of showing that they were more than a match for them in Christian philanthropy, and that the Church of Scotland was not only dominant in point of wealth and numbers, but dominant by goodness and grace. Amid the acclamations of victory, the opportunity of doing a truly great thing was strangely lost sight of.

Two committees were instantly appointed by the Assembly;—the one on church extension, of which Dr. Chalmers was made convener, and the other was instructed to use means to procure state-endowments, of which Mr. Ferguson was to take the direction. The aim of the one was to ascertain the precise state of church accommodation throughout the country, to collect funds, and to mature a plan for their distribution; while the aim of the other was to ply the different members of administration, and to take advantage of every opportunity for procuring a grant of public money for endowing the chapel-of-ease ministers, now received, and the clergymen of those churches which were to be reared throughout the country. Church associations were now formed throughout Scotland for counteracting the Voluntaries, and extending the Establishment. The zeal of the non-intrusionists was young, warm, and productive. Golden fruit was hanging from every twig, if they could only find hands to gather it. Party spirit was invoked to the aid of principle. In a few months the fervid eloquence of Chalmers, in the shape of “a circular,” was diffused throughout all corners of the land, and his denunciations in it of Voluntaries as “spoliators lifting up unhallowed hands to mutilate and destroy,” produced a surprising effect on the public mind. He got credit for being as sincere as he was warm; and his appeal, aided by the circumstances in which it was made, opened a mine of wealth to the church in its adherents, of which they had formerly been altogether ignorant.

In the spring of 1835, the Relief synod met as usual, not insensible to the movements which were now going on, but resolved, as a body, to seek the path of duty, and calmly to abide the issue. It was now to appearance becoming a struggle for life or death—existence or non-existence. Their principles, as a body, made them abhor every thing like taxation for religion, and especially taxation for supporting those from whose church they had dissented. They, accordingly, not only passed resolutions against the grant of public money, for which the Church of Scotland was then praying, but they resolved to approach both houses of parliament by petition.

The question of union with the Secession also, came before the court, from the minutes of last year. Fresh overtures upon the subject, and a friendly communication from the Secession synod, were affectionately entertained. The union was opposed by no one. The Rev. Mr. Smith of Campbelton, while he spoke in its favour, yet wished the question of union put upon a broader basis, so as to comprehend all evangelical Presbyterians. Presbyteries, sessions, and congregations, were recommended to take the question of union with the Secession church into their serious consideration, and report at next meeting of synod, and, in the meantime, to cultivate Christian and ministerial intercourse.

There was thus a fair prospect that two churches, which were the same in their doctrine, ordinances, sacraments, government, and general rules of church polity, and which had dissented from the Church of Scotland on nearly the same grounds, would soon become ecclesiastically one, and heal one of those divisions which mar the beauty and strength of the church of Christ. It was always held that the principles of the Relief church were those of union, and not of division. It was honourable to the Secession church, that after she had healed her own great division, so that scarcely a scar remained, she was now willing to embody a new party into her communion, and to bury in oblivion all those harsh speeches and fiery bickerings, which had marked former contentings for party peculiarities. The liberalizing influence of the age, and the sifting winds of free discussion, had harmonized both parties in their lesser peculiarities. In doctrinal matters they had always believed and spoken alike. Forbearance on lesser topics was now openly professed, and all cause of quarrel and distinction had apparently ceased.

The reeling state of matters, as to Establishments, had not yet

subsided. Political parties were still jostling each other. "The marriage between Presbyterianism and Episcopacy," in the language of Dr. Cook of Belfast, "was consummated." The Orange Episcopal ministers of Ireland were agitating, along with the ministers of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, for preserving their immunities and revenues untouched. Not a fraction of the enormous wealth of the Irish church must be taken by parliament and devoted to education.

Several things had occurred from the meeting of the General Assembly, in 1834, till its meeting, in 1835, which greatly encouraged the hope of the non-intrusionists that the field was their own, and that the strong and liberal hand of the state would lift them out of all their difficulties, and place them above the reach of the angry billows of the sectaries and Voluntaries. A little bill of Colquhoun's had quietly glided through both Houses of Parliament, which empowered presbyteries to build churches by voluntary contributions, to assign to them parishes *quoad spiritualia*, and to prescribe the manner in which the minister should be presented or chosen. This little lever put an enormous power into the hands of the church courts, of the legality of which, however, there are grave doubts yet to be solved in courts of law. Peel had also, in November 1834, succeeded Melbourne as premier, and had inserted into His Majesty's speech from the throne a promise of endowments to the Church of Scotland; and this after both the veto and chapel acts had passed the Assembly. This was most auspicious. Sir Robert had, indeed, been compelled to resign in April, because he was outvoted on the appropriation clause in the Irish tithe bill; but the former colleagues of Lord Melbourne had returned to office, and these were the friends of the non-intrusion party. To appearance, they had the countenance of both Whigs and Tories, and neither party would venture, in the commoved state of matters, to disoblige the Church of Scotland. The Assembly of 1835 was a buoyant meeting. Dr. Chalmers, as convener of the committee on church extension, reported that the grand total subscribed in one year was £57,215 7s. 9d.; the number of new places of worship was sixty-three; and that the country had entered upon a splendid career of liberality on behalf of the church. He was to proceed to London next week to urge the claims of the Church of Scotland upon the government; ask them to endow the chapels built or to be erected; he had every



confidence in a paternal government, when he laid so much money for the rearing of churches at its feet; and he begged the Assembly to send a deputation after him to aid him in the work, when he had paved the way to the treasury of the nation. In London things were found somewhat different from what was expected. Melbourne never would give up the question of Scotch endowments to Fox Maule and the clique of lawyers in parliament-house, Edinburgh, but exercised a judgment of discretion; and the utmost he would grant was a board of commissioners to visit Scotland, and inquire into the real deficiency of church accommodation and pastoral superintendence; which afterwards, in 1836, executed its trust with great diligence and impartiality.

Hope was now a little deferred; but expectation was not blasted. The building of new extension churches still went on. Many of them were put down by the side of Dissenting churches. Dissenting ministers were waited on to inquire if they would join the Establishment, otherwise a church would be built in their neighbourhood. The prospect of an endowment was held out to all evangelical Dissenters who would join their ranks. The Old Light Burghers, as a synod, opened up a correspondence about uniting with the Establishment, "in these times," said they, "of loud and unreasonable hostility to the connection of church and state;" and after years of humbling negotiation, a portion of them crept within its pale.

Principal M'Farlane, in the debate on Calls, declared that the change in the constitution of the Church of Scotland would not induce the great leading denominations of Dissenters to join the church. In this he discovered his usual soundness of judgment. None of the Secession were moved from a steadfast adherence to their former principles. Only two of the Relief went off from the synod, and neither of them managed to carry his church with him.

The Rev. Andrew Fyfe, of Dumfries, though in the prime of life, had allowed his church to dwindle into a handful. At the meeting of the Relief synod, in 1835, "The Presbytery of Dumfries reported that the congregation of Dumfries, with the consent of Mr. Fyfe, was receiving regular supply of sermon from probationers." Their plan was to call a helper and successor to Mr. Fyfe, to carry on with talent and ability the dispensation of religious ordinances. To remove some of the debt which had accumulated upon the church and manse, Mr. Fyfe made two excursions into England, and, as a Relief Dissenting minister,

collected from the Dissenters considerable sums of money. Still his brethren had little confidence in him, as he was always wheeling about Established ministers; and, from the time that endowments began to be talked of as all but certain, to every chapel connected with the Establishment, public report everywhere bruited the information that Mr. Fyfe was about to join the Establishment, and take his church with him. His presbytery were compelled, for the vindication of their own fidelity to the body, to question him on the point. He denied, and shuffled, and explained the thing away, throwing the blame upon the people, when he found himself in danger of being dealt with for following divisive courses. He denied making any application to the Establishment on the very day, and almost at the very hour, when the Established Presbytery was considering his accession to the Church, and a deputation from his congregation were arranging the terms of his admission. An illegal and clandestine meeting of his society was held, when the majority of those who were present voted to join the Establishment. His admission was huddled over at a single sederunt; and two Established ministers were appointed to preach in his church on Sabbath. The Presbytery of Relief were sitting at the time when they heard of his dereliction of principle, and the illegality of the Established Presbytery seizing upon property which was not built for their use. An interdict was craved and granted by the sheriff,—the informality of the meeting at which the church was voted away was inquired into and exposed,—the constitution of the church was produced, and the cormorants, who wished to appropriate to themselves what they had neither reared nor paid for, were ignominiously stripped before a court of law, of what they would have theftuously seized for their denomination. It was a providential thing that “the constitution” was discovered in a writer’s office during the course of the process, otherwise the adherents of the synod might have been wearied out, and deprived of their property by a long, vexatious, and expensive process. This case was speedily terminated. The next, which occurred immediately thereafter, was one of far more importance. It ultimately vindicated, in the most triumphant manner, the civil rights of Dissenters.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### THE CAMPBELTON CASE—CONCLUDING REMARKS.

THE Campbelton Relief church case was a very vexatious and protracted legal process. It commenced in 1835, and was not terminated till 1839. It sprang out of the Voluntary controversy and the Church extension scheme. The non-intrusion party belonging to the Church of Scotland principally supplied the sinews of war; and had they been successful, their success would have wrought sad havoc among the Dissenting churches. After a lengthened litigation they were completely foiled. The civil courts of the country amply vindicated the rights and liberties of Dissenters. They recognised the great principle, that the courts of law would not review the sentence of a Dissenting church court as to its forms or merits, but consider it as a *res judicata*. They would take the judgment as a fact, but they would not cognosce it. They might inquire into its civil effects, but they would neither reverse nor confirm the judgment itself. This was a most important decision to the Dissenting interest in Scotland.

The early history of the Campbelton congregation has already been given. They left the Establishment after having struggled in vain for twenty years, and at vast expense, by protests and appeals for redress of their grievances, built for themselves a meeting-house, in spite of all the opposition which could be given them by the clergy of the country, and proprietors of land in the place, connected themselves with the Relief denomination, and obtained Mr. Pinkerton as the pastor of their choice. The ministers of the Establishment for a long time thereafter took up the position of sullen distance towards them, annoying them now and then a little by domineering over their minister, and laying claim to their collections for behoof of the poor. Such fretting persecutions kept their feelings in a state of irritation against the national church,

and served to unite them more closely as a society of Dissenting Lowlanders, who were living among a people that were aliens to them in blood, language, and religion:

The most fiery tempers, however, will cool. During the pastorate of their second minister, Mr. Fergus, opposition to the Relief church not only died away among the civic authorities of the town, but proffers were made to him, that if he would join the Establishment, his meeting-house would be made a parish church, and he himself would be constituted a regular parish minister. He promptly but politely declined the offer. He had too much principle to prove unfaithful to his ordination vows, and sacrifice the liberties of a people he was solemnly bound to protect.

On the removal of Mr. Fergus to America, and when the Campbelton Relief church was vacant, in 1822, an overture was made to the managers,—“That the congregation should return to the bosom of the national church, and be constituted a regular parish, with all the rights and privileges of the Kirk of Scotland.”\* Though this proposal was addressed to the managers, and came from one of the most influential persons in the town, who assured them that “he had informed himself particularly on the subject, and ascertained its practicability,” yet it was never communicated to the congregation, and was allowed by the court of management to drop into oblivion. They cautiously required the proposer, who worshipped one half of each Sabbath in their meeting-house, and the other half in the parish church, “to write out his plan.” This, as might have been expected, was never done. The full development of the scheme on paper would have been putting weapons into the hands of the people wherewith to assail and batter down the plausible project of union with the Church of Scotland. Old wounds, in the course of the written and pointed discussion of the project, would speedily have been opened, and they would have seen that they were, in the main, to be put under the same legal and ecclesiastical constitution from which their fathers had, with great sacrifices of money, toil, and mental agony, wrought out their deliverance.

During the ministry of Mr. M'Dougal, who was speedily ordained over the vacant congregation, it was hopeless to intermeddle, or to throw out any lures to him or his people. He would have set his face like a flint against every thing like tergiversation.

\* Minute book of the congregation. *Alexander Beith's Letter.*



Having been removed to Kilnarnock, he was succeeded in 1829 by the Rev. James Smith, who was ordained, according to the usual ecclesiastical forms, by the Glasgow Relief Presbytery with very cheering prospects of success. There had been a division at his election, and the leading people in the society voted for other candidates, but there was no rancour of feeling; and from the large and respectable congregation filling the church to overflowing, he received a cordial welcome. He was young. His talents were popular; and his brethren were desirous and hopeful that he would win all hearts to himself.

The Voluntary controversy was then beginning to be broached throughout the country. Like other young ardent minds, he had caught the flame even while he was a student. At its first breaking out, he had taken a very decided part in its favour, in the Calton Relief church, of which he was a member, and after his ordination was a little intemperate in its advocacy. During a public entertainment in the town-hall, he drew upon himself marked disapprobation, for the acerbity of his party spirit. Being refused the use of the bell on the town-hall for calling his people together for public worship, which was wont to be given, he, with a towering independency of spirit, summoned together his congregation, who speedily reared a tower and bell for themselves, so as to be independent of all civic and church domination. Many of his best friends, and of the best friends of the Relief interest, did not approve of this step, but rather than offend him, they allowed it to proceed.

The introduction of a fresh religious party into Campbelton insensibly began to work a change among the religious denominations already in the place. The Secession never had set up a church in Campbelton. Those of their members who came to reside in the town generally joined the Relief church. Shortly after Mr. Smith's ordination, however, the Seceders fixed upon Campbelton as a preaching-station, and after a little built a meeting-house, and began to organize a church. The Secession members connected with the Relief church withdrew, and others also went along with them. Offence was taken at some expressions which were reported to have been used at a public meeting in Glasgow. As the breach was thereby widened between Mr. Smith and the Seceders, so the antipathies were also diminished and became fewer between him and the ministers of the Establishment. A novel and very unexpected intercourse immediately sprung up

between the Relief clergyman and the church ministers, in 1834, and people began to inquire in what this would end. It was deemed passing strange that while the Established ministers throughout Scotland would not even appear on a platform with Dissenters, they should be condescending enough to preach in the Campbelton Relief pulpit. In the Highlands, as well as by the walls of Troy, an enemy with a full hand and a smiling countenance was an object of suspicion. The golden promises which were held out to all Dissenters, in the spring of 1835, to join the Establishment, and participate in those endowments which were to be got for all churches not supported by teinds, had their effect upon the mind of Mr. Smith, and he did not conceal the fact that he now approved of a state provision for the clergy. A change was evidently coming over his mind, but to what extent it would carry him was a problem which circumstances only could solve.

At a regular meeting of the Glasgow Relief Presbytery, in the month of September, 1835, the attention of the court was first drawn to the prevalent rumours that Mr. Smith of Campbelton was about to alienate his church from the synod, and transfer it to the Establishment. The rumour usually was heard under the form of a boasting declaration from churchmen, that things were in a train for their getting the Campbelton Relief church. The presbytery were loath to credit the report that he would clandestinely prove unfaithful to the Relief denomination, or if he should change his principles, that a whole congregation would break up their religious connection, and march away in his train. At the same time, the case of Fyfe of Dumfries, who had denied till the last that he was about to prove unfaithful, was a warning lately given them not to trust too securely to appearances, when the foundations of society were being moved and shaken. That the presbytery might not deal in a rash and unfriendly way with a brother, nor prove unfaithful to the trust of watching over those churches which were committed to their care by the synod, they resolved both to inquire into the rumour, and yet to do it in the kindest way possible. Lest it should prove after all a malicious report, they resolved not even to record it in their minutes; because if once engrossed, it would not easily be wiped out. The best person to inquire at was considered to be himself. It was the most straight-forward course of procedure. They instructed their clerk officially to write him an easy friendly letter stating the facts, and

at the same time summoning him to meet his brethren in Glasgow, and give explanations on the subject.

To this letter for weeks no answer was returned. It was known that Mr. Smith had been in the Low country, and yet he had not called upon any of his brethren to inquire why he was written to, or to make any arrangements for affording them the meeting which they were anxious to obtain. These facts deepened the suspicions which were now settling down upon the minds of his presbytery. At length a short note arrived, immediately before the regular meeting of presbytery, declining to meet with his brethren, or give them any information about the rumoured alienation of his church. This letter was scarcely read in court, and the resolution taken to visit Campbelton and make inquiries upon the spot, when a member of presbytery handed in a letter from Mr. Samuel Mitchell, one of his elders, describing Mr. Smith as having "commenced his Established career" under the guise of discussing and opposing the union with the Secession, and imploring that some person should be sent down "to discuss the matter, so that the people might not be blinded with sophistry." The presbytery saw that they must (either) act promptly, or it would soon be too late to act at all. "After long deliberation, during which every conceivable view was taken of the manner in which the greatest tenderness towards Mr. Smith should be combined with dutiful respect to the Relief interest, it was agreed that a meeting of the presbytery should be held at Campbelton, on Tuesday the 13th October, in the Relief church there, and that Mr. Smith and the session and managers be summoned to attend said meeting, so that the presbytery may examine on the spot the state of matters in that church in reference to its adherence to the principles of the Relief synod, and take measures for that adherence being confirmed and strengthened, seeing that unfavourable reports on this subject are abroad which imperatively call for the presbytery's investigation."\*

When the members of presbytery arrived late in the evening, at Campbelton, by steam-boat, the town was in a state of the greatest commotion. Hundreds encircled them on the quay, and eagerly asked, "Are you able to fight all the lawyers in the town?" There was no appearance of Mr. Smith to welcome his brethren. Things wore a very unfavourable aspect. In the morning, the

\* Minute of Glasgow Relief Presbytery.

presbytery sent a deputation to Mr. Smith to speak with him as a brother, and, if possible, to get from him friendly explanations as to the rumours which were afloat. His reception of them was cold and distant, and, after a few minutes' conversation, he intimated that he had another meeting which he wished to attend. The conference closed before it could be said to have been opened. The committee reported with grief their want of success to their constituents, and Mr. Smith repaired to a meeting in a writer's office, where it was understood the same gentlemen of the law were met, of whom the Christian people seemed to have so much dread, and who on all occasions afterwards appeared as the counsellors and supporters of Mr. Smith.

When the presbytery met in the church with the session and managers, for the proposed investigation, the church, which contains about fifteen hundred, was filled. The presbytery was entirely ignorant of what the records of the church contained. No hint had ever been given them on the subject. When the managers and session, however, produced their respective minute books, they were astonished above measure on discovering the transactions which had been pushed forward at the instigation of Mr. Smith, from the time that he had received the summons of Mr. Ewing. By a long letter and otherwise, he had pressed them to meet instantly and consider the question of union with the Secession, which the synod had sent down for the consideration of their congregations. No church had yet considered the remit, though Mr. Smith assured his congregation that other churches had done so, and that they were dilatory on the point. There was no necessity for such haste, as the synod did not meet till next year in May. Besides, in his communications with them, he had introduced a topic entirely foreign to the overture sent down by synod. Instead of asking them to consider whether it would be proper to unite with the Secession, or continue as they were, he forced on the alternative, whether they would unite with the Secession, or join the Church of Scotland. He avowed his own determination to be, in favour of joining the Establishment; and when the office-bearers of the church were disposed to suspend their judgment as to union with the Seceders, and "to remain connected with the Relief synod as at present constituted," he and his friends strenuously opposed the motion, and declared they would abide "by old Relief principles, as laid down and exhibited by the conduct of their ancestors and predecessors."



As the people did not know what these old Relief principles were, he promised to instruct them privately in them. These things were very strange, as he had himself only been ordained a few years, and farther, he and his session had examined, and given their approbation to the digest of laws and regulations which had been enacted in 1833, and he had promised most solemnly, by open vow in the presence of his church, at his settlement, not to follow any divisive courses.

To throw additional light upon the nature of the written documents which were produced, and to probe the state of the congregation as to its faithful adherence to the synod, it was resolved to hear what the elders and managers had to say on these topics. They were all in court, and had been summoned to attend the visitation of the congregation, that they might give to the presbytery all the information that was in their power.

Their statements were to the effect that Mr. Smith had declared,—“that he was of old Relief principles,”—that old Relief principles were just Establishment principles,—that he would take an endowment to-morrow,—that it would be for the glory of God and the peace of the community in Campbelton, that the Relief church should become an Established church,—that by joining the Establishment, an additional vote would be given to the evangelical side of the church,—that as Colquhoun’s bill had been enacted by parliament, the Campbelton Relief church might secure the election of its own minister and office-bearers, and the management of its own collections in connection with the national church,—and farther, it appeared that these, and such like declarations, were made when discussing the overture of union with the Secession, and that during these discussions, he had contrasted the Secession and Establishment, and said he hoped he would soon join the Church of Scotland. These explanatory facts were elicited in open court, in the presence of the whole congregation, Mr. Smith himself taking a most active part in examining his elders, and cross-questioning them, so as to bring out the truth. This examination, or rather free conversation, which was not very formally gone about, but in which all parties acquiesced and took part, threw much light upon the written documents found in the minute books of the session and managers, laid upon the table of the presbytery. It was no longer a mystery what he understood by old Relief principles, and on what foundation he wished his church to be placed. There was no reason to

doubt but that all the elders were true to the synod, and all the managers, save two, and that the person who had been sowing division among them, and following courses inconsistent with his ordination vows, was Mr. Smith himself, who was placed there by his presbytery for the defence, and not for the subversion of Relief principles.

At the evening sederunt of the presbytery, the relation of Mr. Smith to the court was entirely changed. At the forenoon meeting he had protested against being considered a party without being both summoned and knowing the name of his accusers, but now, when the minute of the forenoon meeting was read, and its merits were to be discussed, he fell to be regarded as the person implicated, and necessarily took his station at the bar. No person can sit as a judge and be allowed a deliberative vote in his own cause; and as he was now the person accused, and might require to be heard in his own defence, he, from that moment, lost his seat as a judge, and became a party.\* The thing followed as a matter of course, without any formal summons being

\* A case somewhat analogous to that of Mr. Smith's was decided in the General Assembly, 26th May, 1829. A committee of the Presbytery of Edinburgh had been appointed to examine and report concerning the vituperative language used in Anglicanus' Letters and the Christian Instructor. The report was presented. When they proceeded to take it into consideration, they insisted that Dr. Thomson fell to be considered as a party at the bar, and ceased to be a member of court, as he was inculpated in it. Against this sentence Dr. Thomson appealed to the synod of Lothian and Tweeddale, and ultimately to the General Assembly. He pled that he could not be considered a party, and that he must first be accused by some party, and of some specific charge, otherwise the procedure was neither regular nor constitutional. "All the fences and safeguards that have been placed round the character of their ministers had been swept away at 'one fell swoop.' Because a committee had given in a report which said something about him, he was to be put to the bar, and made a party! He would ask who they are, and where are his accusers? He would say he had no accusers,—and to say that a man could be a party without an accuser, was as absurd as to say that there might be a child without a father,—an event that was impossible. The committee had not accused him. Were the presbytery then his accusers? No such thing. And he stood in that singular state, that he was accused, and had no accuser." Dr. Inglis, on the other hand, vindicated the presbytery, maintaining that they had followed out the strict and ordinary form of procedure in all such cases. "Notwithstanding all he had heard, there was one fact admitted, and which could not indeed be disputed, that no man can have a right to deliberate and vote as a judge in his own cause. And what is the ground on which this principle is held? What makes it necessary? It is that he has such a personal interest in the matter to be determined, that he may be put in a condition to defend himself. Had Dr. Thomson such an interest in the judgment, as made it improper that he should deliberate and judge in the cause? He did not deny that the report contained

necessary. It is a part of the common law of Presbyterian church government.

After a long discussion upon the facts which had transpired in the forenoon sederunt, and the extent to which they inculcated Mr. Smith, an adjourned meeting of the presbytery, elders, and managers was held in the session-house. The presbytery wished to exact nothing humiliating or painful from Mr. Smith; but simply that he should declare, *ex animo*, that he would abide by the principles of the Relief synod as at present constituted. They required nothing but what was implied in an honest adherence to his ordination vows. He refused to accede; and, after another long meeting held next day, he still refused to accede. He was entreated by his elders to assent to the reasonable request of his brethren, and to terminate the whole business in a peaceful manner; but his legal advisers gave different counsel, and their counsel prevailed. The presbytery, therefore, drew up the following minute as embodying their sentiments on the whole affair as it had appeared before them. "The members expressed their sentiments to the effect, that Mr. Smith failed in his duty to his brethren when he declined holding conference with the presbytery in September,—that he erred in using unguarded expressions in session, which unhappily gave rise in the minds of his elders to the idea that he had a wish to join the National Church,—that Mr. Smith ought, in duty and prudence, to come forward and express his regret at having used such expressions, promise carefully to avoid such expressions for the future, and declare that he

charges of very improper things. He would not read it; but if admitted that it contained such things,—a charge of having used an accumulation of vituperative language,—he had a strong personal interest whether the report was approved of or not. It contained a charge to that effect, and doing so, it was such an accusation as created a peculiar interest, and entitled him to be heard as a party. If, however, he was qualified to deliberate, the Rev. Doctor was also entitled to vote upon that charge. And what was that but judging in his own cause? There was no ambiguity in this; it was quite plain. Now this was impossible, and as to his declaration that he would not vote, no regular court could proceed on such a case, and allow an accused party to act in any degree in the capacity of a judge, upon any such assurance or hope that the individual so interested would not exercise the privileges which he claimed so decidedly. The report alone could not put the parties to the bar, but the resolution to consider it did so; and that resolution being intimated and acquiesced in at the time, the two individuals to whom the report referred became thereby parties." The General Assembly sustained the sentence of the presbytery of Edinburgh, making Dr. Thomson a party at the bar, when the presbytery proceeded to consider the report, and to pass judgment upon it.—*Theological Magazine*, Aug. 1829, pp. 509, 510.

cordially adheres to the determination of his session and managers, to abide by the regulations and principles of the synod of Relief as at present constituted."

It was the general impression of the brethren that Mr. Smith, in some way or other, was not his own master; and that he was linked to a party of professional lawyers, who might be acting for themselves, or for others, but without whose advice he did not venture to take a single step. Two of them were members of his own church. How far he had asked their counsel in his trying circumstances, or they had voluntarily tendered it, no one could say, nor had any one a right to know. On Mr. Smith's final refusal to accede, the presbytery declined to proceed further in the case till their regular meeting on the first Tuesday of November, being desirous of giving him a season for cool reflection, and of availing themselves of the counsel and aid of those members of presbytery who had not been able to proceed to Campbelton. Mr. Smith was summoned on the spot, and the painful meeting was closed. Strife is indeed like the letting out of waters.

When the presbytery met at Glasgow on the 3d of November, it was considered advisable that they should meet in committee and hold a private conference with Mr. Smith. If they and he came to a good understanding, which it was hoped would be the case, less publicity would be given to the details of the affair, and the more it was conducted in a private friendly way the better would it be for all parties. It was not considered as a case calling for libel, because Mr. Smith and the presbytery were agreed in its main facts. He did not deny that he had declined to meet with the presbytery at their citation, for he had answered their letter to that effect. He did not deny the facts recorded in the minutes of session which, as Moderator, he had laid on the presbytery table. He did not deny his own letter to his managers, which was produced at Campbelton at his request. He did not deny that he was refusing to submit to his brethren. He denied no fact on which the presbytery were disposed to found their judgment. The only difference which existed between him and his presbytery respected the manner in which the facts alleged and admitted should be regarded.\* He averred they did not in-

\* In the case of Mr. Baine, before the General Assembly, 1766, a mere parenthesis in his letter of resignation, ("The charge I have accepted,") was considered as sufficient evidence that he was following divisive courses while he was yet a member of the Establishment; and, without a libel, he was cut off and intercommuned. The documentary evidence under the hand of Mr. Smith was far more ample.



volve impropriety of conduct. They believed that they amounted to a breach of his ordination vows, as he was following divisive courses, and moving his congregation away from the principles upon which they were settled, and on which it was his duty to retain them. This discrepancy of judgment as to the merits of the case was more likely to be removed in a friendly conversation, where little explanations could easily be given, than before a promiscuous audience, where the rigid forms of a court would require to be observed. To this proposal Mr. Smith was at first averse, as it would remove Mr. David Colville out of court, who had come from Campbelton to assist him by his legal advice; but, the presbytery having determined on this mode of procedure, he acquiesced, and the court resolved itself into a committee.

After a great deal of discussion, and mutual statements and explanations, it was agreed, that the same minute which had been drawn up at Campbelton, should again be submitted to him, and that he should be required to say whether he would accede to it, and that, if he continued to decline assenting to that declaration, he was informed that the presbytery would feel it their duty to take ulterior steps. Upon this Mr. Smith requested an hour or two to consult with his friends; and, after availing himself of that interval, he peremptorily declined to make any such declaration. He, however, produced a paper stating the extent to which he was prepared to go; but it was so evasive and unsatisfactory that the presbytery refused to entertain it. After being repeatedly altered, so as to bring it nearer to what was required by the minute of presbytery, it was finally presented by him in the following amended shape:—"I pledge and oblige myself to adhere strictly to the Relief principles as understood at the period of my ordination, and to do nothing that will tend to alienate the property of the Relief church of Campbelton from the synod; and as it has been stated, that certain expressions used by me, as to endowments, and joining the Established church in preference to the Secession, left an improper impression on the minds of some of my session, for which it is the opinion of the presbytery that I should express regret; while, as one of the members of this court, I may disagree with many, and claim with them the right of giving my own judgment and opinion, I feel bound, as a measure for peace, to regard it as a matter of regret, that from any cause they should have misapprehended my meaning."

Although there appeared to be little real difference between the

expressions used in Mr. Smith's pledge and the minute of presbytery, yet his conduct necessarily implied that there was in his estimation some important differences, else he would not have refused to meet the wishes of his brethren. No court will allow a party to give an interpretation of their sentence, and to explain it away, by some ambiguous expression or disguised quibble, which will permit his conscience to act in a manner altogether different from what they intended. Mr. Smith declined adhering to Relief principles, as "*synodically declared*," for though this expression was at one time in his pledge, to bring it nearer to the minute of presbytery, yet he, in the face of the court, scored it out. It was also the "*property*" of the Relief church of Campbelton which he pledged himself not to alienate, a thing not immediately in his power, while it was the alienation of the people which the presbytery wished to guard Mr. Smith against attempting. His declaration, also, was understood to offer an open insult on his session, stigmatizing them as having misconstrued his meaning, "from *prejudice* or otherwise." It also made no reference "to his declining to hold conference with the presbytery" when requested to do so. Instead of "expressing regret," which was what the minute of the presbytery required, and instead of promising "to avoid such expressions for the future," as had given offence to some of his session, he claims his right "to disagree" with his brethren, and "give his own judgment and opinion." The pledge being thus defective, when closely examined, in so many particulars, the presbytery refused to receive it.

They also felt it necessary to vindicate their authority. To connive at anything like mental reservation would have been highly unbecoming, and an act of infidelity to the Relief synod. A few were in favour of accepting of his pledge as amended, even though somewhat defective in its expression of regret for what he had done, but the great majority thought it in the circumstances very unsatisfactory. After another adjournment, and prolonged private dealings with Mr. Smith, which it would be tedious minutely to record, the following sentence was agreed to: "That the members delivered their sentiments at great length, to the effect that some speedy and decisive step should be taken in the matter. It was moved and seconded, that as in the written expressions of Mr. Smith's opinion, and in his verbal declarations in court, connected with his declining to give satisfaction to the presbytery, there is sufficient evidence before the court that he is not adhering to his

ordination vows and acting upon them, he ought to be cut off from connection with the Relief body."

All hopes of Mr. Smith's submitting to the court were now at an end. Nothing but disorder and confusion would be produced in the synod, if any one of its ministers was thus to be allowed openly to defy the authority of his presbytery, and to declare in effect, that he would not adhere to his ordination vows. Nothing but this adherence was required of Mr. Smith by the minute of court. The motion was therefore at last, with much reluctance, put to the vote. It was *unanimously adopted*. "Wherefore the presbytery did, and hereby declare Mr. Smith to be out of connection with the Relief body. Against which decision, he appealed to the first meeting of synod for reasons to be lodged in due time, took instruments in the clerk's hands, and craved extracts."\* Immediately after his excision, Mr. Smith wrote to Dr. Chalmers, requesting his opinion and advice, and to his communication he replied, through the medium of Mr. Collins, Bookseller, Glasgow. What motives prompted them to this correspondence, while the case was still pending before the Relief church courts, are known to themselves.

It was apprehended that much injury might arise from the final decision in this case being delayed till the time at which the synod usually met. The presbytery had a choice between two modes of procedure, either to suspend Mr. Smith from the exercise of his ministerial functions till the issue of the appeal at the regular meeting of synod in May, or to request the moderator of synod to summon a *pro re nata* meeting as soon as possible, and allow Mr. Smith, in the meantime, to officiate as minister of the Relief congregation Campbellton. The latter was deemed the more prudent course of procedure for all parties, as the congregation could scarcely be prepared for the issue which had taken place. The presbytery could not persuade themselves that Mr. Smith would be so indiscreet as not to acknowledge his error, nor so unreasonable as to continue his contumacy, after he had a short time given him for reflection, consulting with his friends, and forecasting the results of his divisive courses to himself, his family, and his present religious connections. His eventual submission to the sentence of his brethren was still by many confidently expected.

It was from motives of kindness that the presbytery agreed to

\* Minute of Presbytery.

the anomalous procedure of allowing him to go home, occupy his pulpit, preach to his people, and even dispense to them the sacrament of the Supper. Three of his brethren sent him a letter, offering, if he chose, to come and assist on the occasion. His session did not desert him. His congregation did not withdraw from his ministry. They mourned over what had occurred. And yet, when Mr. Smith dispensed to them the ordinance of the Supper, he did not reciprocate their affection; for while he dispensed the bread and the wine as the pledges of redeeming love, he did not take his place at the communion-table and participate in the ordinance along with them.

A *pro re nata* meeting of synod was held at Glasgow, on the 15th of December, and the case, according to the usual forms of court, was brought regularly before it. Before the business was properly entered on, a meeting for reconciliation, at the instance of some of Mr. Smith's friends in Campbelton, was held with him, by Dr. Thomson, Paisley, who showed him a letter which he had received on the point. The proposal was coolly received by Mr. Smith, who wished the cause, in the first instance, to proceed, after which terms of reconciliation might be proposed. Dr. Thomson informed him, that now was the proper time for accomplishing a reconciliation, and that to attempt it after a full discussion of the case would be impracticable. The parties were called, the papers were read, and Mr. Smith maintained his appeal at the bar of the synod by every plea which his ingenuity and that of his advisers could suggest, either in point of form or on the merits of the case. The presbytery were heard in support of their sentence of excision. After the fullest discussion, which continued during two days, it was moved, "That the sentence of the Relief presbytery of Glasgow be affirmed, and that said presbytery proceed forthwith to carry said sentence into execution: which motion was seconded. The roll having been called, and the votes marked, it was carried *unanimously*; wherefore, the synod decided in terms of the said motion. Mr. Auld, *primus*, was called to the chair, and led the devotions of the synod; after which the parties were recalled, and the sentence of the synod was intimated to them. Mr. Ewing, in the name of the presbytery of Glasgow, took instruments in the hands of the clerk, craved extracts, and requested the synod to instruct the presbytery when they were to meet to carry the sentence into execution. The synod enjoined the presbytery to meet immediately after the



close of the sederunt." The presbytery of Glasgow met accordingly. "In obedience to the direction of synod, declared Mr. Smith out of connection with the Relief body, and the Campbelton Relief church vacant, and appointed Mr. Harvey to preach at Campbelton on the following Sabbath, and intimate as above."\*

Mr. Smith wished to protest against the sentence of synod, but he was not permitted, as the synod is the highest court of the body. A similar attempt was made by some of his legal friends from Campbelton, but on their part also it was incompatible for the same reason, and therefore they went through the form of protesting in the hands of a notary public.

The managers, on hearing that the sentence of the presbytery had been confirmed by synod, and fearing that some legal obstruction might be thrown in the way of Mr. Harvey's obtaining access to the pulpit, and executing the sentence of the synod, lodged a caveat in the office of the sheriff. The necessity for this soon became apparent, for Mr. Smith, in the course of next day, wrote the preses, that though cut off from the synod, "I am advertised," said he, "that I have a right to the emoluments agreed to be provided me at my becoming minister of the Relief church of Campbelton. As, however, I wish, while drawing the emoluments, to render the usual services, I beg leave to intimate to you as preses of the managers, that I intend to go on as usual unless interruption is offered me, in which case I beg to intimate, and I do so with regret, that I will be under the very disagreeable necessity of taking such steps as I may be advised are requisite to secure my rights." The managers, with the exception of Mr. David Colville, were opposed to admitting him to their pulpit, as he was no longer connected with the Relief synod; and, farther, that Mr. Harvey should be allowed to proceed and to preach the church vacant in terms of the appointment of the Glasgow Relief presbytery.

Late on Saturday evening an interdict was obtained from the sheriff, at the instance of the Rev. James Smith, and David Colville, writer, and William Watson, merchant, two of the proprietors of the Campbelton Relief church, and served upon the proper parties, "interdicting, prohibiting, and discharging Mr. Archibald Galbreath, preses of the managers, and Alexander Picken, beadle

\* Minutes of Court.

and key-keeper of the said church, and all others, from giving access to any person whatever, except the petitioner, Mr. Smith, to preach in the said church, or on the green, or on other grounds belonging thereto,—also interdicting, prohibiting, and discharging, the said Alexander Harvey, or any other minister of the Relief presbytery, from preaching the said church vacant, until the petitioner's civil rights are ascertained in the supreme court, and if opposition be given to any of the said parties, to find them or him liable in expenses." This was a high assumption of power. Though Mr. Harvey was only acting in obedience to the orders of an ecclesiastical court, and carrying into effect an ecclesiastical sentence, his lordship assumed for the time a jurisdiction over him and all the ministers of the Relief presbytery of Glasgow, and interdicted them "*from preaching the church vacant*" anywhere. Mr. Harvey, however, knew, that as a minister discharging ecclesiastical functions, he was not amenable to the sheriff, and, therefore, with consent of the managers, he preached the church vacant in the lane leading to the place of worship. The usual audience, about 1,500, attended, and amid the biting winds of a December sabbath, listened with profound attention to religious services conducted in such trying and peculiar circumstances. They felt it a hard thing to be shut out by the power of law from that house which their forefathers had erected as an asylum from religious persecution.

A meeting of proprietors and members was called thereafter to take the necessary steps for having the interdict removed. The most determined resolution was manifested by the meeting to abide by the Relief synod, to repel the vexatious attempts of Mr. Smith and his few friends to prevent them from hearing sermon in their own place of worship. Some of those who had signed the protest which was attempted to be taken at the close of the meeting of synod, openly declared that they had been induced to give their names under a false representation, and now cordially gave in their adhesion to the synod.

Things now assumed a very dark and vexatious aspect to the Relief congregation of Campbelton. Their former pastor had now dragged them into a court of law. Nearly all the writers in the town were employed in his favour. Subscription papers were opened in Glasgow and other places by members of the Establishment to aid him with funds in carrying on the process. Regular associations were formed at Greenock and elsewhere for giving

him aid. Their spirit may be judged of from the letter which the Greenock association sent him, with its first remittance of fifty guineas. "Rev. and Dear Sir, I am directed to intimate that a meeting of your friends was held here lately, for the purpose of considering your case, and for adopting such measures as might be deemed necessary. The following resolutions were unanimously agreed to:—That this meeting, highly approving of the conduct of the Rev. Mr. Smith of Campbelton, when brought before the presbytery and synod of Relief, and believing that he is contending for truth and righteousness against falsehood and oppression, hereby resolve to procure subscriptions to be remitted to him to promote his interest in whatever way he may see fit, and with that view appoint a committee to superintend the matter. The committee have instructed me to send you an order on the Campbelton branch of the Renfrewshire bank for fifty guineas, which was subscribed with much cordiality by a number of your friends in this town. Permit us to say, that we have every confidence in your final and triumphant success in the extraordinary contest in which you are engaged. We are confident that you will keep your eye fixed on the pole-star of truth which will illumine your path and brighten up your prospects, and that while you will manifest zeal and alacrity in employing every constitutional means to forward your interest, you will at the same time commit yourself and your cause, by earnest persevering prayer, into the hands of God as unto a faithful Creator." A remarkable letter this truly!

As the interdict was taken out both against Mr. Galbreath, the preses of the church, and against Mr. Harvey and the other Relief ministers of the presbytery, who were living at such a great distance from each other, it was both difficult and expensive for them to make joint answers before the sheriff in Campbelton. They were necessarily compelled to have both a law-agent in Campbelton and another in Glasgow, yet what, in the first instance, was expensive and troublesome was overruled for good. The agent in Campbelton, the only one in all the place who would undertake the case, was advanced in life, and an entire stranger to ecclesiastical cases before a civil court. This necessarily led to the employment of Messrs. Mitchell, Henderson, and Mitchell of Glasgow; and the cause of the congregation, mingled up with that of the presbytery, got the advantage of their legal knowledge, correct judgment, and matured experience in Dissenting church

cases. By their advice the Relief presbytery of Glasgow declined the competency of the sheriff court to sit in jurisdiction on their proceedings as a presbytery. The question of *interim* possession was argued for several months before his lordship, who continued the interdict already granted, "in respect the object of this process of interdict seems to be to *continue*, and not *invert*, the present state of possession."

The right of *interim* possession was afterwards determined by the supreme court, and till that is done it would be useless to load our narrative with any observations upon this strange interlocutor, which really *inverted* the possession of the pulpit from a minister in connection with the Relief synod, to one who was not amenable to its courts, and cut off from all connection with it. The case was instantly advocated to the Lords of Council and Session, that a judgment might be procured from them on the point. Mr. Smith and his two friends had also in the meantime raised "an action of declarator" before the supreme court, for having himself declared still the minister of the church, notwithstanding of his excision; and also that his handful of adherents were its real proprietors and possessors, to the exclusion of all others.

This action of "declarator," which will afterwards be considered, had been raised by Mr. Smith before Lord Moncrieff as judge ordinary, and, therefore, when the question of interim possession came to be appealed to the Court of Session, it also naturally fell under his jurisdiction. Two judges are never expected at the same time to master the preliminaries of the same case under two different aspects. His lordship had the character of a sound judge and a good ecclesiastical lawyer. Notwithstanding of these recommendations, it was felt necessary to ask the opinion of council, whether it might not be advisable to petition that the processes should be removed to some other Lord-ordinary. In giving his evidence before the antipatronage committee of the House of Commons in 1834, his lordship had expressed himself as to Voluntary churchmen in the following way: "I must be permitted to observe, (I think it is a proper place to make the observation, which is deeply impressed on my mind,) that the true or at least one principal cause of the agitation at present going on for destroying the Establishment, the true or a principal cause of the agitation by that newly-constituted class of persons, I mean newly-constituted in name, who call themselves Voluntary churchmen, is to be found



in the clear perception, that the church is rapidly improving, and that evils, which were formerly of a serious magnitude, were and are greatly lessened, and continuing progressively to be diminished." And, again, a little farther on in the same paragraph, he says, "When we observe that the scheme for destroying the church by persons who say that every thing should be supported by voluntary contribution, leads them to the extraordinary measure of abandoning all the original principles as mere seceders from the church, (for, till a very late period, they would have taken it as an affront to be called Dissenters,) and anxiously adopting the title of Dissenters, while at the same time they avow an adherence to every doctrine of the gospel as contained in the standards of our church. When we see them proceeding in this manner, it is impossible not to think that there must be some original cause for this extreme agitation; and if I am not mistaken, and I think I cannot be altogether mistaken, though there may also be other sources of it with which I am not acquainted, I think that a good deal of it is to be traced to the cause I have mentioned." Motives of a very outrageous kind had thus been gravely ascribed by his lordship to Voluntary dissenters, in reference to the very agitation which, in the opinion of the opponents of the synod, had, in a great measure, produced the Campbelton case. Counsel advised to trust his honour and equity as a judge, which were unimpeached upon the bench, and as charity thinketh no evil, both cases were allowed quietly to proceed before him.

To understand the judgments and decisions of the Lord-ordinary, and of the Inner division of the Court of Session upon the case of interim possession, which falls first to be considered, it is necessary that the outlines of the pleadings of both parties should be glanced at. The statements of council in managing a case are not law, but they serve to throw light on what the judges declare to be the law of the land. The speech of a judge, in summing up a case, generally refers to the line of argument maintained by the council.

The congregation then were the advocates, and Mr. Smith and his friends were the defenders. When these terms occur in the following narrative as to the case of interim possession they must be so understood. Both parties, in taking their station before the Lord-ordinary, acknowledged the justice of the sheriff's general maxim, that "the possession, during the process on the merits of the case, was to be *continued* and not *inverted*; but the advocates

held that the sheriff had by his decision actually *inverted* the possession.

1. They maintained that he had inverted the possession as to Mr. Smith. They held that he had access originally given him to the pulpit for performing religious services in it, in connection with the Relief body and under its control; whereas the sheriff had extended that right to Mr. Smith alone, after he had been deprived of his standing in the religious denomination, and excluded all other persons appointed by the Relief church judicatories—a state of possession which never existed before; “whereas an interdict can only be granted to protect a party in possession, by continuing his possession as it was formerly had, and not by altering or enlarging it.”

2. He had inverted it as to the advocates,—who were the congregation. The property of the church was feudally invested in trustees for their behoof, and committed to certain persons elected from the general body of proprietors to manage its affairs, and, at its very first institution, had been in connection with the Relief presbytery. Funds were expended upon building and maintaining it for the express purpose of enjoying religious ordinances in connection with a denomination of whose principles and practice they conscientiously approved. They and their predecessors had for nearly a century been in full possession of these privileges. On the principles of the Relief church they formed a connection with Mr. Smith, whom they selected on the ground that he was a member of it, making his incumbency or connection with it the condition of their connection with him and their obligations towards him. Mr. Smith, said they, “has been expelled by the judicatories of that church for a violation of his ordination vows. The necessary effect of the interdict granted is to *deprive the advocates of the possession of their own church in connection with the Relief presbytery*, for which alone it was erected and maintained, *and has all along been possessed*, by excluding from preaching in that church every individual but himself, who is confessedly no longer a member of the Relief body; in so far, therefore, as the advocates’ rights are concerned, the effect of the interdict is obviously not to continue the *status quo*, but completely to subvert it.”

On these grounds they asked that the interdict should be recalled, irrespective altogether of the merits of the action of declarator, which were not properly *hujus loci*.

The respondents, Smith and his friends, in bringing forward

their defences, based them upon the two following assumed facts.

(1.) That Mr. Smith was not tried according to the rules and regulations of the Relief synod,—that the sentence pronounced upon him was in violation of their form of process,—and that the offence with which he had been charged was not relevant to infer the sentence pronounced, as it was nothing more than a declaration of his opinion that he would adhere to the original principles of the Relief body. They entered into a long contrast of the form of procedure observed by the church courts in his case with what they maintained should have been the form according to the regulations of synod.

(2.) They endeavoured to show that the Relief church of Campbelton, “though it has hitherto had its ministers ordained by the Relief presbytery, and in connection with it, yet it was no part of that religious community,—that they presented their ministers to their church independent of it,—and entered with them into terms independent of church courts, and that the sentence of synod cutting off Mr. Smith did not therefore dis sever him from the Relief church of Campbelton, but that he is still entitled, in virtue of his private engagement with the proprietors, to preach in it, and to draw all the emoluments of office.”

After stating these things at great length, they sum up the strong points of their case in the three following propositions.

(1.) That the sentence of the presbytery and synod of Relief can, as such, and independent of a positive or implied contract, have no civil effect given to it. The civil effect given to the sentences of the courts of the Established church depends exclusively on statute, whereas the sentences of dissenting church courts can have no more civil effect than the regulations of any masons’ lodge, or other voluntary association.

(2.) In the present case, even if the sentence of the presbytery and synod of Relief had been regularly pronounced, it could not have the effect of depriving Mr. Smith of his rights as minister of the Relief church of Campbelton. The sentence does not *depose Mr. Smith from his office of a minister of the gospel*, it simply declares Mr. Smith “*out of connection with the Relief body.*” A sentence like this, however competently and regularly pronounced, can never deprive Mr. Smith of his character of a minister of the gospel, nor dissolve the pastoral relationship between him and his flock. It can do nothing more

than separate him from his connection with the Relief synod, that being all it pretended to do.

(3.) The whole proceedings of the presbytery and synod of Relief have been so entirely in violation of their own rules and regulations, that no civil effect whatever can possibly be given to their sentence. In the contract entered into by a minister at his ordination, it can never be implied that parties agree to submit to the capricious determinations of a body in violation of their own rules, on the faith of which being observed the contract was entered into.

(4.) The respondents in "their action of declarator" undertake to establish, that while Mr. Smith and his adherents continue to maintain the principles and to promote the objects on which the Campbelton church was founded, the Relief synod, and the advocates who adhere to them, have deserted the one and are endeavouring to defeat the other.

On these grounds they contended that Mr. Smith should still be continued in possession of the church till the process of declarator was determined. In support of this claim they referred to several cases, particularly to the process which sprung out of the split which took place between the Old and New Light Burghers, and during which the ministers were retained in the interim possession of their churches till it was brought to a conclusion.

The great leading principle which from the beginning to the end pervaded their pleadings of 96 folio pages, was, that the civil courts were entitled to examine the proceedings of dissenting church courts both as to their form and merits, cognoscing the grounds of their judgment, and pronouncing upon them whether or not they were agreeable to their own regulations before any civil effect could follow from them. To make this plain they illustrated the position in which they wished dissenting church courts to be placed toward the civil courts of the land by the following example:—"Thus, if in a mason lodge a certain contribution is paid by each member, and a privilege obtained of an allowance in sickness or old age; and if a member be expelled, and the resolution expelling him be founded upon in a court of law in defence against a claim for the allowance, that instant it becomes competent for the court of law to consider the proceedings of the lodge, and determine whether the expulsion was in accordance with the regulations on the faith of which the expelled party became a member and subscriber. In like manner, when the sentence of a church court is pleaded as having a certain civil effect



in putting an end to a contract, or depriving a man of patrimonial advantages enjoyed by him, the courts of law must necessarily be entitled to judge whether it has been pronounced in accordance with these regulations, with reference to which, and on the faith of which, the contract was entered into. In regard to the Established church courts, civil authority has been given to their sentences by *statute*, while pronounced agreeably to the constitution sanctioned by the statute. In regard to dissenting church courts again, as in the case of all voluntary associations whether religious or not, the civil effect given to their resolutions *must depend exclusively on contract*,—and it must always be a matter of civil cognizance to determine whether the conditions of the contract have been violated or adhered to. The Relief presbytery and synod are bodies whose proceedings are avowedly regulated by *certain known and prescribed rules*, and in entering into a contract by which civil effect was to be given to their determinations, it was *of necessity a part of the contract that these rules should be adhered to*, otherwise the civil consequence was not to follow. When the Relief society of Campbellton agreed with Mr. Smith to be their minister, he being ordained by the Relief presbytery with certain civil privileges to subsist during his incumbency, while it was a part of the contract on the one hand that his incumbency might be put an end to by a sentence of Relief church courts, it was on the other hand an equally essential part of it, that such sentence should be pronounced *in accordance with their own rules and regulations, on the faith of which being observed the contract was necessarily entered into.*”

On these statements, which they considered as embodying so many incontrovertible maxims, they insisted that Mr. Smith's possession should not be disturbed, till the whole procedure of the Relief presbytery and synod was examined by the civil courts, and judicially determined upon whether or not it was agreeable to their own laws and regulations.

In answer to these asseverations it was maintained by the advocates or the congregation, “that it was of the very essence of all religious associations that they should be free from external interference, as to their discipline, and it would be a contradiction in terms to speak of the state tolerating, much less protecting, a religious sect, while either its tenets or its discipline were subject to be interfered with by courts of law. It is involved in the very idea of religious liberty, that churches should be supreme and in-

dependent in all matters connected with their spiritual affairs. Acting upon this principle, the law leaves them entirely to themselves in such matters; neither on the one hand lending aid to enforce their rules; nor, on the other hand, interfering with their execution.

“It no doubt may, and sometimes does, occur as in the present instance, that the pecuniary rights or interests of the members of such religious associations may be indirectly affected by the acts of its judicatories, and in this way questions may arise in courts of law which may require them to take cognizance of the proceedings of the judicatories of a dissenting church. But when this happens it involves no exception to the rule of non-interference. Courts of law take cognizance of such sentences simply as facts without any reference to their merits, as consistent or inconsistent with their supposed tenets, and apply the law accordingly without entering into any review of the grounds on which such sentences are pronounced. Parties on becoming members of a dissenting church are held to have submitted themselves to its discipline, and to the jurisdiction of its ecclesiastical courts. It is essential to religious liberty that this principle should be given effect to, and that courts of law should not interfere in spiritual affairs. No man who joins a church, therefore, has any right to complain of courts of law for holding, on the principle of implied consent, that the sentences of the spiritual courts of the church, of which he is a member, amount to *probatio probata* in all questions of doctrine or discipline.——No doubt it is possible that the sentence of such courts may do him injustice; but he took the risk upon himself, and has himself to blame for having put it in their power; and if he has entered into a pecuniary contract which may be affected by their sentence, he is met by a similar answer.

“It is impossible to imagine a better case than the present, or one in which there can be less pretence of hardship on any party, in holding the sentence of deposition pronounced by the church court *probatio probata*, and declining to enter on its merits. Least of all can such a complaint be listened to from Mr. Smith, who not only contracted with the advocates (the congregation) on the footing of being a member of the Relief church, but actually received ordination from it, and on that occasion came under an express obligation to submit himself to its judicatories by answering in the *affirmative* the following interrogatory, which

is part of the formula of ordination: ‘Do you promise to *submit yourself* in the Lord humbly, willingly, and in the spirit of meekness, to the *admonitions of your brethren in the ministry*, and according to your power to *maintain the unity and peace of the Relief church?*’ ”

On these grounds the congregation maintained that Mr. Smith had, *prima facie*, been stripped of his office as a Relief minister,—that no judge could repon him,—and that in the meantime he must also be held excluded from the church till the issue of the declaratory process, when it would be discovered whether he had any right to the church, and what that right was.

They also pointed the attention of the Lord-ordinary to the fact, that at the division between the Old and New Light Burghers, when the officiating ministers were retained in the interim possession of their churches, there was a division in the synod and in the congregations, each contending that they were the true Burgher synod, and that till it was ascertained which of them were adhering to Burgher principles, no change in possession could take place. In the present instance, however, there was no division in any of the church courts; for the sentence was unanimous in both presbytery and synod, and the case was one purely of discipline upon a contumacious brother.

When the Lord-ordinary came to give judgment in the case in October 1836, he declared that he did not feel himself prepared to recall the interdict, and that sufficient grounds had not been shown for disturbing Mr. Smith’s possession as minister of the church at Campbelton during the dependence of the process of declarator. He gave his opinion, but not a decision, and reported the cause to the Inner House, with a long note containing his views. He did not consider it of so great importance to the Dissenters of the country as the advocates wished to represent it. After a few such prefatory remarks, he observed: “The soil and fabric of a church are a subject of civil property; and when a question arises either as to the absolute right and title in such a subject, or as to the right to possess it, while the question of property is under trial, the court must necessarily judge of such questions, by applying to this case of title and contract, with due regard to its great peculiarity, the same principles of municipal law which regulate similar questions on other contracts; and they cannot be deterred or excused from doing so, merely because the dispute comes out of the spiritual

relations of the parties, and the spiritual objects for which the building was acquired, or because the discussion may involve the *necessity* of taking *some* view of ecclesiastical affairs.—

“ This is a case of contract simply, and it is perfectly manifest that no aid can be obtained in the argument, on the one side or the other, from the law applicable to the Established church, which rests on public statutes.”—

Again, says his lordship, “ Make the supposition that the synod *had actually resolved* to join the *Secession* church, and he thinks that, attending to the original *principles* of the Relief church, and the doctrine delivered by Lord Eldon, it would be difficult to hold that Mr. Smith could be deprived of his condition and rights as minister of the Campbelton church, or that any portion of the proprietors could be deprived of their property in it, because he or they declined to concur in such a union, and it is also a question of importance whether the standing laws of the Relief body are not *pars contractus* which the court is obliged to consider.”—

Rising still higher in his convictions that Mr. Smith must be kept in possession during the process, his lordship adds, “ that the sentence pronounced upon him is inept for his removal. The question here is, Whether the anomalous sentence pronounced (not *censure*, *suspension*, or *deposition*) of *cutting Mr. Smith off* from connection with the Relief synod, is sufficient, *de plano*, to compel a *change in the possession* of the church. It appears to the Lord-ordinary that this must be solved in the negative.”

Putting the thing with point, his lordship concludes: “ The notion that *excluding Mr. Smith from the church* is no inversion of the possession, because he cannot preach there as a minister *in connection with the Relief synod*, is little better than a play upon words.

“ The matter being thus reduced to a question of civil rights, the Lord-ordinary looks to the precedents, and he sees that, in the case of Craigdallie, and more remarkably in that of Bulloch, January 31, 1809, even after the first judgment in Craigdallie, interdicts against any change of possession were granted, and that the state of possession was also preserved in the case of M'Crie, February 24, 1809, till final judgment. The present case appears to the Lord-ordinary to be much stronger for not altering the possession than any one of those cases, because the constitution of the church and congregation is more doubtful, and the grounds



of objection to the proceedings against Mr. Smith, and the change of principle by the synod, are much more tangible. Very possibly the advocates may ultimately make out their case; but it must be fairly tried, and not seized summarily.”\*

This note excited very great astonishment among all the Scottish dissenting denominations. Some of the questions raised in it were considered to strike at the root of the independence of dissenting church judicatories, and their authority over their congregations, if they were found to be law, would be virtually annihilated. According to his lordship their sentences were not to be viewed, as the lawyers say, as *probatio probata*,—as simple matters of fact, but when any civil effect flowed from them, the regularity and merits of the procedure and judgment of the church court were to be canvassed like any other civil contract, and judged of by the civil courts. A deposed minister could, in this case, always appeal to the civil courts, keep possession in the meantime of his church, and be allowed to prove to its judges, that the spiritual court had erred in fulfilling its contract with him, that he was not guilty of the crime laid to his charge; and, on convincing them of this, he would be allowed to continue in the possession of his church, manse, and glebe, notwithstanding of his having been expelled from the body to which he belonged. This was felt to be setting the civil judges over dissenting ecclesiastical courts; for scarcely any sentence could be pronounced upon a minister, without his civil rights being either directly or indirectly injured thereby. Besides, granting that the civil effect springing from the sentences of dissenting church courts, is the result of contract, the question still occurs, what is to be taken as the extent of the implied contract? It avowedly could not be that the Court of Session was to be constituted the judge of any ecclesiastical procedure which might take place affecting the incumbency and *status* of a dissenting minister; and yet this is plainly implied, in the power assumed by his lordship over the decisions of ecclesiastical courts when any civil effect follows. This would be giving the contract at ordination a meaning and extent which was never contemplated or intended by any of the parties. Finally, the distinction which his lordship attempted to draw between the civil effect of the sentence, of *cutting off* and *deposition*, was considered altogether futile. Either of these sentences strips a minister

\* Christian Journal, pp. 105—108. 1837.

of his spiritual office in his particular denomination. In it he can henceforward execute none of his official functions; and all the civil benefits which were connected with his *status* as a minister, are entirely at an end. His pulpit, his stipend, his manse, all go together, because they are all connected with the functions of his ministerial office.

This legal note of his lordship was very discouraging to the congregation. The only thing *hopeful* about it was his *declining* to give judgment. If the thing was clear as the light of day, why not give to Mr. Smith at once *interim* possession? Mr. Ellis, the agent for the congregation in Edinburgh, applied his calm discriminative mind to his lordship's note, and sent to Glasgow a sifting examination of its contents, pointing out clearly its mistakes, while he luminously laid down what he considered the law in all such cases. It would have been indiscreet to have published his remarks. Being furnished, however, with a judicious legal document, it was resolved that Mr. Ewing of Partick, assisted thereby, should grapple—as well he could—with his lordship's note, and that the relater hereof should write an article on the Campbelton case to keep the hearts of friends from sinking, as there was no doubt but that justice would eventually “win the day.” The latter was soon called upon to fulfil his promise, in the publication of a pamphlet, along with the Rev. Mr. French, Edinburgh; and Mr. Ewing nobly executed his part of the conjoint labour, and produced a pamphlet which *riddled* his lordship's note as if with grape-shot. It was the last service which Mr. Ewing performed to the synod, and it is a fine monument of the perspicacity of his mind and the soundness of his judgment.

As an illustration of the evil effects arising from Mr. Smith's getting possession of the Relief pulpit of Campbelton by the sheriff's interlocutor, without any control from the judicatories of the Relief church, he gives in his pamphlet the following example. Lord Moncrieff considered it a play upon words, to say that the possession was *inverted* because Mr. Smith did not preach there in connection with the Relief synod. But, says Mr. Ewing, “An incident has occurred which renders the inversion of the state of possession palpable to the most unreflective and undiscerning. Mr. Smith has dispensed the sacrament to the miscellaneous congregation he has drawn around him. The Campbelton congregation had been a Relief, and consequently a Presbyterian one; and he could not, for decency's sake, entirely

disregard Presbyterian forms, and modes of government and discipline, in the administration of ordinances, and in admission to them. But he had not the shadow of a session—not a single elder adhered to him. What does he do? He introduces elders, office-bearers, of an alien and a hostile religious denomination, with which neither himself nor his former congregation ever had any ecclesiastical connection; and he gives them—to serve his purpose for the time—spiritual office and administrative authority in this, which had always been a Relief church. Yes: four elders belonging to the Established church officiated on the occasion. These were Mr. M'Corkindale, Dr. Harvey, Mr. Carlton, and a Mr. Ewing. The first three belong to the Established church in Campbelton. The last is a member of the session of St. James' parish, Glasgow. Mr. Smith thus introduced the office-bearers of the Established church into the Campbelton Relief church, in their official capacity, performing official acts, and discharging ecclesiastical functions, superintending the admission to the Lord's table, one of the most important duties of a session, and distributing the elements to those who communicated,—*the wine contained in cups inscribed, 'The Relief Kirk, Campbelton.'* Did the sheriff mean to give the dispensation of the solemn ordinances of religion, in the Campbelton Relief church, to Established elders? It is evident, at least, that he has done it; if not in intention, at least in effect. And was this no inversion of the previous state of possession? The common sense of mankind will not stomach and digest so absurd and preposterous an assertion, but revolts at it."

The case being reported by Lord Moncrieff to the Second Division, came under their review on the 7th March, 1837. Having heard counsel and advised the cases for the parties, they recalled the interlocutor pronounced by the sheriff, and enjoined equal possession of the meeting-house and pulpit, between the advocates and respondents, till the action of declarator raised by Mr. Smith should be heard and determined. This was considered a step in the right direction; and the congregation, dissenters in general, and all constitutional lawyers, were delighted with the correct, comprehensive, and judicious view which Lord Meadowbank took of the case in pronouncing his judgment. His lordship, when a very young barrister, having been employed as counsel in the great legal case between the Old and New Light Burghers, was fully master of the legal and constitutional rights and privileges of Dissenters. Like Lord Mansfield's famous speech on behalf

of the rights of Dissenters of England, Lord Meadowbank's may be considered as the most important speech ever delivered in behalf of the rights and liberties of Dissenters in Scotland. It states the law in regard to them in a remarkably succinct and luminous manner; and as he handed over the notes from which he spoke to the Collector of Decisions, it can be depended upon as correct and authentic.

"I beg leave," said his lordship, "in the first place, to state the points that I now understand to be settled by the case of *Aikman against Craigdallie* and others, and the rest of the cases to which we have been referred.

"*First*, I take it to be clearly and finally settled, that a trust may be legally established, a civil right created for behoof of a body of dissenting Christians professing certain tenets, and agreeing to have those civil rights fixed by and dependent upon the observance of such rules and regulations as are inherent in, and calculated to maintain, the principles they support.

"*Secondly*, That it is a legal object of such a trust that it may profess to be constituted with a view to perpetuity, even by placing in the hands of a recognised body the right and power of controlling and modifying those rules and regulations, in conformity with the fundamental principles of that sect of dissenting Christians to which those constituting the trust may have professed to adhere, and that the civil court will not take cognizance of the proceedings and determinations of those ecclesiastical judicatories, as they may be termed, upon matters of doctrine and discipline, but hold them to be *probatio probata* of the principles of the sect.

"*Thirdly*, That the original deed or other instrument by which the trust is created need not, in order to be effectual, specify within itself the particular conditions of its creation, but that these objects may be ascertained, in order to their recognition and enforcement by courts of law, by facts and circumstances, and by a train of proceedings indicative of the purposes and the views of the parties.

"*Fourthly*, That in order to confer upon a party the right of enforcing the objects of the trust, it is only essential that he should possess a *persona standi in judicio*, and qualify an interest to have it enforced. But it is not required, and that is the point, which, though now settled, was originally doubted—that in those cases, where the parties contributing their money and their means to the constitution of such a trust, and forming a congregation of dis-



senting Christians, shall have differed in opinion, and both claim possession of the trust-estate, the success of either will depend, not upon the greater amount which each may have contributed in the creation of the subject, or in their numerical superiority, but in their adherence to the *original principles* which it was their professed object to maintain in the constitution of the trust.

“All these propositions were sifted to the bottom, and, as I think, and shall immediately show, finally settled, in an early case, that of Auchincloss, not referred to in the papers, and in the case of Aikman and Craigdallie.

“In the present case, it is unnecessary to discuss any question of title. There is no doubt that each of the parties has a *persona standi*, and both have an equal interest to enforce the object for which they are contending; but I have found it indispensably necessary for me, even in this question of possession, to consider how those settled doctrines to which I have referred are to be affected by the judgment we are now to pronounce in favour either of the one party or the other; and your lordships will therefore permit me to state, in the *first* place, in point of fact, that I have no doubt that the meeting-house at Campbelton was originally erected, and the endowment connected with it thereafter created, for the uses of a congregation of dissenting Christians, to be in all future time connected with, and in subordination to, that body which the contributors and congregation recognised as the synod of Relief. This object of the trust, I may state generally, and without going into particulars, is sufficiently ascertained by a consideration of all the acts of the parties exactly as they were in Craigdallie's case (and, in fact, the condescendence here is, *mutatis mutandis*, little else than a transcript of the condescendence there), and from the call and ordination of the different clergymen, and of Smith himself, under authority of the synod, and whose sole title of induction was the licence to preach which he had received from the judicatories of the Relief church. *Secondly*, It is admitted, nay, it is maintained by both parties, that the tenets of the Relief church are those of the Church of Scotland, and the Confession of Faith and Formulæ of the latter constitute the foundation of the former. By these, your lordships know well, the rights of presbyteries, synods, and general assemblies, in all matters of discipline and doctrine, are declared to be incontrollable; and while these judicatories in the Established church possess the exclusive power of determining the ecclesiastical relation between pastors and

their congregations, so, in the church of Relief, they possess a power equally supreme and irreversible. Of the effect of the ecclesiastical relation, in the Established church, upon the civil rights of the pastors, there can be no question, and so it is stated by the Lord-ordinary; but I think his lordship inaccurately supposes that this effect is produced from express statutory enactment; for I am acquainted with no statute which expressly provides that such shall be the civil effect consequent upon a judgment of an ecclesiastical court. It only is the result of the legislative recognition, at the establishment of the Presbyterian worship, that the government of the church is in these bodies formed and constituted upon principles exclusive of the control of the civil power, and upon the plain principle thence following, that if the ecclesiastical body possess the power to suspend, or take away from the pastor his right to the character or function in which alone he had acquired the civil right, the latter must follow of course the loss of the former.

“Whether the same effect is to be produced upon the pastors of Relief congregations, when deprived by their ecclesiastical superiors of the character and functions of clergymen, if bodies having a *persona standi*, and a legal interest to maintain their rights, come before your lordships, proving that it was a fundamental principle of the Relief church that the right of deprivation lay with the synod—that the synod exercised their ecclesiastical power—and contending that the pastor being deprived of his function, could no longer be maintained in the civil possession of a right, which, by the agreement of parties, had been created solely for the purpose of maintaining a congregation in connection with the Relief church, is the question we are now required to determine.

“In this respect, I am humbly of opinion, that the Established church and the Relief church are precisely in the same situation. The difference between the two I apprehend to be simply, that the one is an endowed church, where the civil right flows from the provision of the State, while, in the other, it has been constituted by the voluntary agreement and obligation of the parties. But in both, it is the right to the function, as determined by the ecclesiastical authorities of the bodies respectively, upon which the civil and patrimonial rights of the parties in this respect must altogether depend; so, accordingly, in England the law was so declared by Lord Mansfield, in a case where a *mandamus* was

applied for to restore a clergyman to a dissenting meeting-house. 'The right,' his lordship says, 'to the function is the substance, and draws after it everything as a pertinent thereto. The use of the meeting-house and pulpit follows by necessary consequence the right to the function of the minister, preacher, or pastor.'

"And upon the same principle, the late Lord-justice-clerk Macquene pronounced his judgment, as Lord-ordinary, in the case of Auchincloss in the year 1792. Auchincloss, it appears, was deposed from the office of a minister by the Associate Presbytery of Stirling in the month of September 1790. A portion of his congregation adhered to him, and a petition was therefore presented by some of the other members of the congregation to the sheriff of Stirling, praying that he should be ordained to remove from the manse, glebe, and pertinents, and deliver up the keys of the church. The petition was finally refused by the sheriff-depute, 2d November, 1790; but a bill of advocacy being presented, and an action of declarator raised at the instance of Auchincloss and that portion of the congregation which adhered to him, the Lord-justice-clerk Braxfield, in the year 1792, pronounced the following judgment:—'In respect the Lord-ordinary does not consider it competent for this court to review the decisions of Associate congregations, commonly called Burghers, when sentences are pronounced by them in their ecclesiastical character; therefore, sustains the defences,' &c., and found expenses due. The court adhered, on advising petition and answers, and Auchincloss thereupon abandoned the meeting-house.

"In this case, it is quite plain that the civil right was by Lord Braxfield determined to depend altogether and exclusively on the right to the ecclesiastical function—that the judgment of the dissenting judicatory taking away that function being, by the principle and rule of the dissenting sect, final and conclusive, the right of Auchincloss to the meeting-house and endowment was necessarily resolved and determined. In that case, no doubt, the term *depose* had been employed by the Burgher synod in dissolving their connection with Auchincloss; and the Lord-ordinary, in his note, seems to be of opinion, that the want of it in this case must operate to the prejudice of the argument maintained by the advocates. But I think this is altogether a mistake. The meaning of *depose* is just to displace, although, in the judicatories of the Established church, it has, by long and inveterate usage, obtained a technical, and, when applied to ecclesiastical sentences,

a particularly solemn signification. In fact, in those judicatories there is no other term employed, when a clergyman is deprived of his function, or his relation with his congregation, or with the church, dissolved and abrogated ; but it is the reverse in the case of different bodies of Dissenters. There, if a pastor is cut off from his connection with the body for a moral offence, the terms employed are those of *depose* and *deposition* ; but it seems that when this takes place merely in consequence of a difference of opinion, or contumacy, or other matter not inferring moral delinquency, terms are employed less offensive in their nature and character, such as dropping the name of the party from the roll, or declaring him out of connection with the body. Accordingly, in the case of Aikman and Craigdallie, the former words were employed with respect to Mr. Jarvie, whose connection with the Associate synod was thereby held by this court to have been dissolved, and who and his adherents were finally removed from possession of the Burgher meeting-house and endowments at Perth, and the latter are the words which are employed in the present case by the Relief presbytery to signify the termination of Mr. Smith's connection with that body, the abrogation of their licence to him to preach, and the extinction of that ecclesiastical relation between him and his congregation which was altogether dependent upon this function which the synod had first conferred, and then taken away, and whose right to do so he himself had expressly recognised and acknowledged, both at accepting his licence and receiving his ordination.

“ I pray your lordships also to observe, that in this case the determination of the synod was unanimously pronounced, and there is no room for maintaining an argument, as was done in the cases of Bulloch and Craigdallie, that here had been a schism in the supreme judicatory of the dissenting body, one party adhering to, and the other abandoning, the original tenets, for maintaining which the trust then in question was originally constituted ; and it was therefore *prima facie* incumbent upon the court to ascertain, not merely what was the original tenet of the body, but which of the parties continued to adhere to it, and by so doing had, in truth, become the Associate synod. Here the unanimous decision must, upon every principle, be taken, *prima facie*, as *probatio probata* of what is the true doctrine of the sect ; and, therefore, upon general principle, and in a preliminary question of possession, I should have thought that, if the points I have



before referred to had not even been finally fixed and determined, as I take them to have been, the party who, by his own showing, has been deprived of that character, under which alone he got possession of the meeting-house, and that is the only question before us at present, is bound to yield it up for the use of those in whose favour a right was constituted, of a nature totally exclusive of any interference on his part, cut off as he is from his connection with the Relief church.

“ While I state this generally, however, I am free to admit, that, upon a consideration of the circumstances in which Craigdallie’s case was ultimately determined in this court, though not upon the terms of the judgment of the House of Lords, remitting the case for consideration, that it might be thought and contended, that, supposing the respondents to have distinctly averred that the whole of the Relief synod had concurred in abandoning the original tenets they professed, by becoming Mahomedans, Unitarians, or Episcopalians, it would have been incumbent upon your lordships, after due inquiry, and being ascertained of the fact, to have pronounced a judgment finding that that judicatory was no longer the Relief presbytery; and that the respondents or others, as the case might be, as adhering to their original tenets, were entitled to enforce the maintenance of a trust, in consonance with the principles and objects for which it was originally constituted.

“ But this is an extreme case, which cannot admit of being supposed, and is no less applicable to the presbyteries and synods of the Established church, as to the presbyteries and synods of the Dissenters; and your lordships might just as well be asked to consider what would be the effect upon the civil rights of a clergyman deposed by the Church of Scotland, after that church had in their ecclesiastical judicatories become unanimously reconciled to the See of Rome, or become professors of any heathen superstition. At present, we have nothing resembling this case before us. Here the supreme ecclesiastical judicatory has been unanimous upon the matters of doctrine and discipline, and against their judgment, which, by the principles of the sect, is final and conclusive, we have nothing but the simple protestation of this single individual and his few adherents. Indeed, Mr. Smith appears to me pretty much in the situation of a bishop in the early days of the church, mentioned by Gibbon, whose name I think was Paul of Zamosata, bishop of Antioch, who, having been deposed for schism, appealed to the emperor Aurelian against the judgment

of his ecclesiastical superiors; but Aurelian, having convoked a conclave of some seventy or eighty bishops, whose opinions were unanimous in one way, while Paul stood alone in support of his own opinion, held, that the sentence of deposition, affording evidence which must be held *probatio probata* of the loss of the function (and through which alone he had a right to the temporalities of the See), ordered him to be removed from the possession of the benefice.

“In like manner, in the present case, I repeat, that upon general principles, I must hold that the judgment of the Relief synod is, if not *probatio probata*, at all events, *prima facie* evidence of the principles of the sect;—that from their judgment alone we can gather what were and what are the doctrines and principles of the Relief church;—that by having his connection with them cut off, after an appeal too entered by himself from the decision of the presbytery to the highest judicatory of the body, by whom the original sentence was confirmed, he must be held to have abandoned their principles, by professing which he originally acquired the right to the function which has now been abrogated and taken away; and, therefore, in maintaining himself in possession of that civil right, which was incident to the function, he is endeavouring to invert the original objects of the trust in a way the most offensive to the feelings of those who, continuing in connection with the Relief synod, are entitled to be recognised as the party for whose benefit the church was originally constituted.”

His lordship then proceeded to give a very minute account of the Perth case—Craigdallie against Aikman—in which he had been counsel, and which had fixed the law as to religious trusts. His lordship stated it in the following terms:—“Where a congregation becomes dissentient among themselves, the nature of the original institution must alone be looked to as the guide for the decision of the court; and to refer to any other criterion—to the sense of the existing majority—would be to make a new institution, which is altogether beyond the reach, and inconsistent with the duties and character of this court.”

“Your lordships will therefore consider, in how very different a situation we are now placed from that in which our predecessors stood, when the Kilpatrick and Perth cases were first brought forward six and thirty years ago. At that time, questions of this kind were altogether new, and the majority of the court leant to the opinion, that the civil interests of the parties were to be de-

terminated, not by a consideration of the religious purposes for which the subjects had been originally destined, but according to the amount of the pecuniary contributions which the parties respectively had embarked in the concern. Accordingly, in the questions of interim possession, it was but natural that the court should proceed with reference to that state of their opinions. But the matter is very different now. The judgments of the House of Lords have placed the matter on quite a different foundation, and their lordships have taught us the principles on which all such cases are to be adjudicated, and from which, in my humble opinion, we have no right to depart.

“In truth, therefore, we now stand as the court stood the day that the final judgment in the case of Craigdallie was pronounced in the year 1815; and I would ask your lordships, whether if one or a dozen of cases similar to that then determined had for the first time come into court upon that day, and the point of possession had come before their lordships, they would not, and must not, have applied the principle they had then recognised, and removed from the interim possession of the different subjects the individuals who had dropped their connection with the Associate synod? But the case before us now is in precisely the same situation. The subjects here, it is admitted, were destined for the purposes of a religious community in connection with the synod of Relief. The synod of Relief as a body has adopted no new profession whatsoever. It is not even pretended that it has done so. The respondent, Smith, was inducted as pastor over this congregation, solely in virtue of the licence to preach which he had received from the Relief synod, and the induction and ordination under their authority which subsequently took place. To the authority of that body he was bound to submit in questions ecclesiastical. In fact, as to the matters which have given rise to this question, by pleading before the presbytery, and then appealing to the synod, he again solemnly recognised their power to determine the matter at issue between him and his brethren. By that supreme ecclesiastical judicatory he was in effect deprived of his licence, and of all ecclesiastical connection with it, in virtue of which alone his relation of pastor over a Relief congregation was originally created, and must for ever depend. Now, as I find all this to be quite clear, as to matter of fact uncontroverted, and as I understand it in point of law incontrovertible, I think that the advocates have made out a case *prima facie* which requires

of us to place them in possession of this meeting-house, which it is their object to apply to the purposes of a congregation in communion with the synod of Relief, and to remove from that possession the respondent, who has lost all title to retain it, just as much as if he had been reconciled to the church of Rome, or had declared himself an Episcopal."

Lord Meadowbank thus laid it down as law, that Mr. Smith had, *prima facie*, by the unanimous sentence of his brethren, lost his *status* as a Relief minister, and along with it, his pulpit, his stipend, and all that appertained to his office as a Relief clergyman, and that the possession of the church belonged to the congregation as a *Relief congregation*, till they were stripped of it by a legal process. The other judges had not bent their minds to this subject with the same intensity that he had done, and as in most of the old cases of a somewhat similar kind which had come before the court, there had been an interim allocation of the pulpit between the contending parties, they were disposed to recommend the same in this one. Lord Meadowbank, indeed, with great propriety reminded their lordships that the cases were not parallel. In the old cases which belonged to the Secession, there was a split in the body, and they were obliged to give the pulpit one part of the day to the one party, and on the other part of the day to the other party, till they found out which was the Secession; but, in this instance, there was no split in the body, as both presbytery and synod were unanimous, and therefore Smith should be held out of the denomination and out of his church, unless he could show them some pleas in law why they should restore him, which, in his estimation, was impossible. However, as their lordships did not yet see so clearly through the matter as Lord Meadowbank, they gave each party possession a part of each Sabbath, and instructed the pressing forward of the merits of the case in the process of declarator, when they would decide the whole matter.

It was evident that Lord Meadowbank had not forgotten the knowledge he had early acquired in conducting the case of the New Light Seceders; and that he had a clearness of apprehension, and maturity of judgment, about the rights and privileges of Dissenting church courts, which was perfectly refreshing, and which would ultimately conduct to a right decision. The process of *interim* possession having thus come to an end, after winding its tedious way through all the different courts of law, from the sheriff court in Campbelton, to the Second Division



of the Court of Session; the main case began to be seriously taken up before Lord Moncrieff as Lord-ordinary.

#### THE ACTION OF DECLARATOR.

While the possessory question was discussing before the sheriff of Argyle, Mr. Smith and his two friends—Messrs. Colville and Watson—the one of them a manager, and the other not even a member of the congregation nor a sitter, but only the proprietor of a pew which had belonged to a relation who was dead, pushed forward the action of declarator before the court of session by issuing summons against Archibald Galbraith, preses of the managers, and nearly the whole body of the proprietors. It was intended by this process to have themselves and their few adherents put legally in possession of the church and the property connected therewith. Their demands were of no scrimp or stinted kind. I. They wished it found and declared by the Court of Session, that the Campbelton Relief church was founded upon principles neither opposed to endowments nor to church Establishments, and that no individual opposed to these could preach in it nor interfere regarding its use. II. That the pursuers and the proprietors, of the same views as to state endowments as themselves, had the sole and exclusive management of it, free from all interference by the synod of Relief, and had the sole power to choose its minister, who should adhere to the same old Relief principles on which they averred it was founded. III. That the Rev. James Smith shall be declared minister of the said church, and entitled to its emoluments, notwithstanding of the sentences of the Relief church courts cutting him off from the denomination. IV. That the defenders shall be decerned and ordained to pay Mr. Smith £180 annually as his stipend. V. That the defenders shall be interdicted from interfering with Mr. Smith during his incumbency, and from appointing or admitting any person after his incumbency has come to an end, as the minister of the church, who is opposed to church Establishments. VI. That the defenders should be ordained to pay the pursuers £700 as the expense of the process.

After the case of interim possession was decided, this process of declarator, as already intimated, was taken up and prosecuted with vigour. As the contest became keen and stubborn, the parties indirectly engaged in it, and who had been hitherto concealed behind the curtain, were involuntarily brought forward into public view.

To raise the necessary funds and take mutual counsel, one of the Established ministers of Glasgow called together a meeting of the friends of the Establishment, at which Mr. Smith was present, to give the necessary information and enlist their sympathies more decidedly in the Campbelton contest against the adherents of the Relief. An ample subscription was resolved on, and means were put in operation for supplying their treasury with the sinews of war. These things were published at the time in the newspapers of the day, and served to convince the Campbelton Relief congregation as to the persons who were their real opponents.

The case came on for hearing before Lord Moncrieff, as ordinary, on the 15th June, 1838. It was fully argued for several days. At the close of the discussion it was arranged that each party should prepare "cases" on the whole cause, and present their arguments in the best possible shape, to be laid before his lordship for the purpose of being transmitted to the Inner House for judgment. Connected with this appointment his lordship issued a note, drawing the attention of both parties to those points which required chiefly to be met and discussed. The note being intended mainly for the use of council, its insertion is not necessary for understanding the process. His lordship intimated in it that the court would look to the case of Aikman against Craigdallie for the rule of judgment,—that if Smith's case was one of *discipline*, the court would not inquire into the merits of such a proceeding, although, said he, "the pursuers anxiously maintain that this being a question of contract, if the regulations which constitute the contract had not been observed, the court is competent to declare the proceeding illegal:" still, though the court would not interfere in a case of discipline, his lordship thought that it might inquire whether it was really a case of discipline or not, and if it was found not to be so, its having the colour of a judicial proceeding could not prevent the court from dealing with it as they thought proper. The real merits of the case he believed lay in the *doctrine* held by the Relief church at the time when the Campbelton congregation was formed, "*as to an Establishment of religion*;" and whether the synod had abandoned their original principles as to this. It was his opinion there was a departure; at the same time the tenet concerning the lawfulness of a Church Establishment, in a seceding Voluntary church like the Relief, might not be, *in essentialibus*, so as to entitle the minority of the proprietors adhering to it to carry off

the property from the majority who had abandoned it. To this he required special attention.

The general bearing of the Note thus sketched was no doubt adverse to the case of the congregation, and the leanings of his lordship's mind were strongly apparent. He founded not a little of his argumentation on the fact as stated by counsel at the bar, that the synod had refused to accept of Mr. Smith's pledge, in which he had promised to adhere to the regulations of the synod as "synodically declared;" while, had he only referred to the pledge as lodged by Mr. Smith himself, in the process, he would have seen that these words were blotted out, and that the groundwork of his argument was a nonentity. The congregation, however, did not despair of obtaining justice. Discussion has a natural tendency to sift away error, and bring out the truth.

That Mr. Smith and his friends might be fully prepared for arguing their case, they applied to Lord Moncrieff for a diligence against *Havers*, and thereby obtained a right of access to all the title deeds and records of the oldest Relief congregations, as well as to the Minute books of the synod and its presbyteries. This was a very sweeping right of search, and shows the thorough determination which was taken in certain quarters to penetrate into the inmost recesses of the Relief church, and produce every iota of evidence which the records of one congregation might supply against another to strip it of its property. This was a serious matter, and liable to many objections, as every congregation had, at the commencement of the denomination, formed its own constitution without submitting it to the church courts, and yet it was obeyed, and minute books and title deeds were produced. Every point could not be carried by appeal to the Inner House. It would have incurred ruinous expenses.

The cases having been prepared, as will yet be noticed, were boxed, and transmitted, along with the process, to the Second Division of the Court of Session, having prefixed to them the following Note from the Lord-ordinary :

"As this cause was formerly before the court on the question of possession, the Lord-ordinary thinks it proper that it should be laid before the court on its merits also. He will say very little concerning his own views on perusing these revised cases, having in his note, after the full debate before him, sufficiently indicated where he thinks any material difficulty in the case hinges.

"I. The defenders (the congregation in this process were the

defenders) have entirely failed to convince him that, in the original constitution of the Relief church, it was held by that body as a principle of religious belief that a Church established by law in connection with the State, or, in particular, that the Church of Scotland, as so established, is contrary to the law of God, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures. Indeed, if he understands their argument, they do not venture to maintain this affirmatively. They seem to be desirous of treating it *negatively*, by maintaining that the establishment principle was *not* held as an *essential tenet* of their church. The effect of this, if it were made out, is no doubt an important part of the case. But the question which it raises is evidently quite different from that which would arise if the defenders could maintain that it *was* a tenet of the Relief church that an establishment is *anti-scriptural*. They do not attempt this; and, considering the history of that part of the Secession, it would, in the Lord-ordinary's opinion, be a very vain thing to make such an attempt.

“He must, however, farther remark, that the great weight of the evidence goes to establish that the Relief church, in its fundamental constitution, did hold *positively* the opposite doctrine, namely, the *lawfulness* of an Established church, and particularly of the Church of Scotland, as by law established. And it is particularly to be observed, that the question does not relate to any opinion merely on the general *expediency* or *inexpediency*, or the “*soundness* or *unsoundness*” of the principle in political or moral science, but to the *scriptural lawfulness* or *unlawfulness* of such an establishment; and he thinks it demonstrated that the Relief church did *not* in its original formation, hold or entertain any *doubt* on that point as a *matter of religious belief*.

“II. The Lord-ordinary is, on the other hand, most perfectly convinced that the defenders in this action, and the Relief synod to which they adhere, do now hold and maintain, that an Established church is *contrary to the Scriptures*, and do now treat this as a matter of *religious belief* in their body. It is indeed apparent to him, that the proceedings against Mr. Smith originated in this and nothing else. If the court should have doubt on this point, or should think it not sufficiently established, that such a tenet has now been made part of the constitution of the church represented by the synod, this part of the case will be reduced to the question, Whether the making the point *to be an open question*, assuming that it was *not* an open question in the original consti-



tution, would be sufficient to sustain the present action? But how it can be held that the synod consider and act upon it *as an open question*, in the face of the proceedings against Mr. Smith, and of the refusal to accept of his declaration that he adheres to the principles of the Relief church *as synodically declared*, the Lord-ordinary is still in great difficulty to comprehend.

“Supposing the two questions of fact now referred to to stand in the way above stated, there will still be two questions of law of considerable difficulty and importance to be disposed of.

“1. It is very anxiously maintained that this is to be regarded as a mere case of *discipline* under the rules of the Relief church, and that therefore this court has no competency to consider the legality of the proceedings of the synod, or to inquire whether there has been such a change of opinions in the Relief church or not. Certainly if the Lord-ordinary considered the proceedings as truly proceedings in a case of discipline, he should think it perfectly clear that this court had no right to interfere. He retains the same opinion that he expressed in the case of *Osburn v. Symington*, *July 5th*, 1831, as quoted in the papers, and would be far indeed from interfering with the independence of the church courts of any branch of the Secession. But the question is, Whether such a case here occurs? That appears to him to depend on the matters of *fact* already adverted to, when they are considered according to the truth and reality of the cause of disagreement, and of the whole transaction regarding Mr. Smith, which has raised the question regarding the possession and property of the chapel. If the facts stand as the Lord-ordinary thinks they do, and if the difference be of a *vital* description, the court are necessarily forced into a discussion precisely similar to that which was held; they must enter into the case of *Aikman v. Craigdallie*, and in the three English and Irish cases referred to in the papers. But if, on the other hand, the departure from the principle should not be held to be so decided, in fact, or so essential in character, then, no doubt, a very plain question of jurisdiction must arise, namely, that this court cannot inquire into the merits of any judicial determination of the Relief synod, in matters ecclesiastical, or look into the various shades of opinion which may exist in the points of religious belief held by such an associated body. The Lord-ordinary never entertained a doubt on this point; and it was fully conceded and held in all the four cases referred to. It is on the *facts*, and on the question how far there

is an attempt to pervert the subject of property devoted to one purpose, to the support of a system of *religious belief* which is *opposed* to it in a *fundamental point*, that the doubt arises.

“2. The other question of legal inquiry is still more delicate, namely, how far, assuming that the synod have departed in principle from the doctrines of the Relief church as originally established, and as they were held at the time when the Campbellton congregation came into connection with it, on the lawfulness of a church Establishment, that difference is in a point *so vital*, as to compel the court to consider it with a view to the determination of the rights of property. The Lord-ordinary formerly indicated the serious doubt which he entertained on this point. He has considered the arguments of the parties, and particularly the argument of the pursuers, for removing that doubt. He has to regret that the defenders have scarcely dealt with the difficulty in the way in which it presents itself to his mind, from an evident unwillingness to meet the question on *the assumption of the facts*, as they are averred by the pursuers, and as the Lord-ordinary thinks they really stand. To argue that the point is not of a vital character, by assuming that it was *left as an open question* at the first, can never resolve the difficulty in a way satisfactory to the Lord-ordinary. And though he thinks that *on that hypothesis* there is great weight in the reasoning of the defenders, and is sensible that a great deal of it may be applied to the question in the other view, he does not feel that it fairly meets the point as it had occurred to him, or supplies him with a sufficient answer to the views taken of the subject in the revised case for the pursuers.

“The Lord-ordinary has given all the attention in his power to their argument. He cannot say that it has entirely removed the doubts which he entertained, though he must observe that the pursuers have, in some instances, treated as opinions, what he only intended as indications of grounds of doubt requiring examination. On the whole, he will only say that he thinks the pursuers have gone a good way to establish their proposition, that the point in dispute, whenever it is considered as matter of religious belief, ought to be regarded as of essential importance. He cannot go so far as to hold with the pursuers, that every thing whatever which is laid down doctrinally in a confession of faith, must be held to be *de essentialibus*, the least departure from which will affect *the use of the property*. But looking to the origin, character, and constitution of the Relief church, he sees great difficulty

in holding that the adoption of *a principle of religious doctrine*, which stamps the Established Church of Scotland, as in its very existence and constitution, in connection with the state, a church which stands *in opposition to the truths of the Bible*, is not an entire departure from the principles of the Relief church, in a vital and fundamental point. He will not enter into any detail, His general impression is, that if the facts be established, though the question may still be difficult, it is a departure which the founders of that church would have esteemed of the most fundamental magnitude.

(Signed)

J. W. M."

This Note diffused great joy among the friends and adherents of Mr. Smith. The Scottish Guardian could not contain its gladness. It congratulated its readers that, in virtue of the elaborate argument of counsel, it was "now demonstrated," that the original principles of the Relief body explicitly recognised the lawfulness of church Establishments, and blew the trumpet, that the "*synod knew that the Campbelton chapel will be merely the first of a number of their chapels which will be wrested from the grasp of Voluntary usurpation.*"

The printed pleadings in this case, drawn by Mr. Dunlop for the pursuers, had extended to 190 quarto pages. He certainly put forth all his strength, and that is not little, in a laborious attempt to prove, first, that the synod had abandoned its original principles as to endowments and church Establishments. After the most extensive search into the records of the body, no minute, indeed, had been found approving of Establishments; he attempted, therefore, to make out the fact generally, first, from the origin and history of the body; secondly, from the records, and calls of congregations, and constitution of churches; thirdly, from the acts of the presbytery and synod, requiring their ministers to sign the Confession of Faith, which he held approved of Establishments and endowments; fourthly, from the proceedings of the Campbelton congregation itself. He then proceeded to show that the synod and defenders had adopted Voluntary or Anti-establishment opinions from their own admissions, acts of synod, alteration of formula as to signing the Confession, and resolutions, and petitions to parliament against endowments. In the second department of his case, he endeavoured to prove that the proceedings against Smith were not truly in the way of discipline, but that he was

cut off for adherence to the old Relief principles, and opposing union with the Secession Voluntaries; and farther, that the Relief congregation of Campbelton was not properly a Relief church, and that the proprietors, and not the members, presented or elected the minister. The line of argument pursued in the declaratory case was thus nearly the same as that pursued in the possessory; only the order of the arguments was reversed, and those which were then last were now first.

The points which were still strenuously pled were the two following: that the Relief synod had abandoned the Establishment principle, because they at first signed the Confession as a whole, whereas they now signed it with an exception about the power of the magistrate in religious matters. By this change it was maintained they had lost all right to their churches; and as the Relief congregation of Campbelton adhered to the synod which had changed its principles, they ought to be stripped of their property. The second thing for which they also strenuously contended, was, that the Court of Session had a right to review the sentences of Dissenting church courts, and that they should declare the sentence passed upon Mr. Smith informal, and null, and restore him to his status and church. These were the two leading conclusions, which they wished to have established as law. His lordship thought them all but made out. He did not venture to give a decision, but in the foregoing note he gave it as his opinion that the synod had changed, "in a vital and fundamental point," and that this change should carry along with it the loss of the property; and farther, he thought that, while the Court of Session could not sit and review a case of discipline in Dissenting church courts, yet they could examine whether it was a case of discipline or not, and if they found it to be merely a case of discipline in name and not in reality (as he held Mr. Smith's to be), then they might open it up and annul it, as to its civil effects.

In their defences, the congregation were peculiarly fortunate, by their excellent counsel, Messrs. Monteith and More, in placing the case in a correct and striking light. The summons had been issued by Messrs. Smith, Watson, and Colville, jointly, as if they had all stood in the same relation to the defenders; and they had strangely pled their cause as if engaged in a process with the synod, and not with the proprietors of the Campbelton Relief church. The synod were not even summoned, and had no place in the process of declarator, though by mingling



them up with it, a great deal of confusion had been introduced into the record, and the proprietors were held accountable for every thing which they were supposed to have done, and yet the synod were not present in court to give explanations or defences. The counsel, Mr. Monteith, with great tact and discrimination, separated Smith in his pleadings from Watson and Colville, and considered first, what was the bearing of the one,—and, secondly, what was the legal condition of the others towards the proprietors.

In regard to Mr. Smith, the defenders contended, that having contracted with him, *as a clergyman of the Relief presbytery*, to officiate as the minister of a congregation *in communion with that denomination*, and to administer the ordinances of religion according to its doctrines and discipline, and in subordination to its judicatories, and he having become unable to implement these conditions, in consequence of his having been cut off by the Relief synod from all connection with them, without any blame imputable to the defenders, they cannot be called upon to perform their part of the agreement. He cannot officiate to them as a Relief minister, and they are not bound to pay him his stipend, and admit him to the use of their pulpit.

In arguing the case against the other pursuers, Messrs. Watson and Colville, counsel closed at once with their averments. The defenders denied that the Established principle ever was an essential article in the creed of the Relief church; and further denied that the Voluntary principle was held as an enacted tenet of the denomination. On the contrary, they averred that the question of the power of the civil magistrate in reference to religion, as professed by the Establishment, was always regarded by them as an open question, or one on which scrupulous members of the church were at liberty to hold what opinions they pleased, though as separatists from the Establishment, they were generally opposed to it. In the constitution of the Campbelton church there was no implied contract, as to the sentiments of those who might become proprietors, in reference to this point. The property was to be held in connection with the Relief church; but it might be held equally by persons holding the Establishment, or the Voluntary principle. There was no test on this point, and it was accordingly held by persons professing both opinions.

After remarking on the great improbability that a church, in the very act of dissenting from the Establishment, and thus dis-

connecting itself from the state, should make the doctrine of an Establishment an express term of its communion, the defenders took up the five separate heads condescended upon by the pursuers, and showed at length, under each of them, that the Relief synod *never* maintained the doctrine of a civil Establishment of religion. The first Minute book of the body being lost or destroyed, save two or three leaves, no original enactment could be produced about signing the Confession. It was not even mentioned in the first minute constituting the Relief presbytery, 1761, which had fortunately been preserved. Hutchison, in his writings, distinctly makes exceptions to the power of the civil magistrate mentioned in the Westminster Standards, and the oldest living ministers, ordained by the early fathers, had signed the Confession with the usual exception about the power of the civil magistrate. Ample quotations were given from the writings of Gillespie, Boston, Baine, Hutchison, Douglas, Smith, Colquhoun, and others, showing that they maintained the spiritual nature of Messiah's kingdom, as opposed to civil Establishments of religion; and, farther, that the best divines of all churches, have held that a religious establishment is no part of Christianity, but a civil arrangement, and, therefore, not an essential and fundamental article of faith. The proceedings and sentence of the synod as to Mr. Smith, as already given in a preceding part of this narrative, were succinctly stated, and held to be regular and well-founded, both as to their form and merits.

Their lordships having maturely considered the case, delivered the following interlocutor on the 6th June, 1839. "The lords, on report of Lord Moncrieff, having advised and conjoined processes of advocacy and declarator with the whole proceedings, and heard counsel; in the process of declarator sustain the defences, and assoilzie the defenders from the conclusions of the libel and decern; and in the process of advocacy recall the original interdict, and dismiss the petition and decern: find expenses due to the defenders in both processes; allow the account to be given in, and remit to the auditor to tax and report in common form.

(Signed) D. BOYLE, J. P. D."

As this process was of great importance to the Dissenters in Scotland, and as their lordships had given it their matured consideration, the speeches which they delivered, in giving their

judgment, were carefully taken down by short-hand writers, and printed, without any abridgment, in the *Christian Journal*, July, 1829, and in the *Secession Magazine* of the same year. The principal parts of them only require here to be selected, so as to give a condensed view of their lordships' grounds of judgment on the whole case. As the judges on the bench at the time, Lord-justice-clerk, Lord Medwyn, and Lord Meadowbank, all necessarily went over the same topics, one dwelling more at length upon one point, and the others upon another, it is no difficult matter to give the sum of their speeches in a connected series of paragraphs; thus giving a succinct and clear view of the legal bearings of the case.

"The title of the Relief church property is in certain individuals, 'present managers of, and contributors to, the upholding of the said church of Relief, and survivors of them, as trustees and managers for behoof of themselves and whole other managers and members present and to come, of the said associate congregation.'

"On the vacancy in 1829, Mr. Smith, who had been educated at the Relief Theological Hall, and licensed by its courts, was ordained, by the Relief presbytery, minister of the Relief congregation at Campbelton.

"By sentence of the Relief presbytery, affirmed by the Relief synod, Mr. Smith has been cut off from his connection with them, and deprived of his status and character of a Relief minister, and the connection between him and the Relief church of Campbelton has been dissolved.

"The present summons brings this proceeding before us at the instance of Mr. Smith, and one trustee for the managers and proprietors, and one proprietor of this place of worship, these three pursuers against a great number of proprietors, including four of the trustees in whose name the property is vested, but the synod are not called as defenders." \*

"The pursuers contend, according to the principles of law, as laid down in the case of Aikman, when disposed of in the House of Lords, and since acted upon in other cases, particularly in that one called the Clough case, decided in the Court of Exchequer in Ireland, *that property*, which has been settled in trustees or managers for a certain religious body, must remain vested for behoof of those who adhere to the original tenets of that reli-

\* Lord Medwyn.

gious body, and cannot be retained or disposed of by a majority of the body, however large, that has deviated from those original principles. By these decisions we must all be guided. The pursuers, therefore, contend, that they are entitled to succeed in the conclusions of this action, for having the property of the Relief church of Campbelton declared to belong to the parties therein mentioned, and the other conclusions of this action found *in terminis*.

“ In order to obtain such decree from this court, it is, however, indispensable, that the pursuers shall prove, by evidence that is clear and unequivocal, that, as this particular church at Campbelton was to be held for behoof of persons, members of, and in communion with, the church of Relief which was first established in 1761, the defenders who, as a majority of managers, proprietors, and contributors, assert their right to the property, have deviated from certain fundamental and essential principles of the Relief church, and that the pursuers themselves, though a small minority, now adhere to those principles from which the defenders have so deviated, and are therefore entitled to have the property declared to belong to them exclusively, while Mr. Smith should be declared as alone entitled to the use of the church, and possession of the stipend provided under its constitution.”\*

“ The argument of the pursuers rests on several propositions. 1st, It is said that it is a fundamental and essential part of the faith of the Church of Scotland, that the state shall maintain and endow that church for the religious instruction of the people. 2dly, That this article of belief was professed as an essential article of faith by the presbyteries and synod of Relief, when they first left the Establishment; and, 3dly, That this has been abandoned and renounced by those bodies, as one of their tenets, thereby changing *in essentialibus* the nature and character of the grounds on which the church of Relief separated, and continued separate, from the Established Church of Scotland.”†

On the merits of the case, as founded on these allegations, so excellently put, the Lord-justice-clerk spoke as follows:—“ It must be observed at the outset, that much obscurity arises from there having originally been no specific constitution drawn up, or any distinct and explicit exposition of the principles on which the Relief church was founded. Nothing can, indeed, more

\* Lord-justice-clerk.

† Lord Meadowbank.



clearly evince the conviction of the body itself of this defect, than those treatises and histories of its rise, that were directed to be prepared, and which were undertaken and published by some members of synod, even at late periods, as noticed and founded on by both parties in this case.

“ But the pursuers seem to maintain, that the Establishment principle as professed by the Church of Scotland, or, in other words, the principle of that church as to the powers and obligations of the civil magistrate in reference to spiritual matters, was adopted as a fundamental and essential tenet of the church of Relief, which all its members were bound to maintain—and that of late the Relief presbytery and synod, as a body, and the defenders individually, have professed an opposite doctrine, holding it unlawful and unscriptural for civil rulers, as such, by their maintenance and support, to aid in the promotion of religion, or to maintain an Established church. The *onus* of proving this proposition lies clearly on the pursuers—and the question now to be determined is, has this obligation been fulfilled?

“ The two chapters or sections in the Westminster Confession relied on, and which the Relief body subscribed, are—Confession of Faith, chap. xx. sect. 4, and chap. xxiii. sect. 3.—which I need not stop to read. Now, by having subscribed or declared adherence to this Confession, in which those passages are contained, it is maintained the fundamental principle in question was adopted by the Relief body.

“ It is pretty material, however, to observe, that there are in those chapters no words whatever which directly amount to an obligation on the civil magistrate either to endow or maintain the Established church; and considering what the individual clergymen and congregations actually did when they separated from the Church of Scotland, and established the first Relief Presbytery in 1761, it is extremely difficult to comprehend how they could be held to adhere *in toto* to the standards of that church, embracing an unqualified assent to the Establishment principle as now explained by the pursuers.

“ So far as doctrine and general discipline are settled by the Westminster Confession, they might and did adhere to it possibly. But being directly opposed to patronage and its exercise as unscriptural, the very idea of getting entirely rid of it, accomplished by leaving the church, seems itself to show a positive departure from the constitution of the Established church.

“ But holding the burden of proof to be entirely on the pursuers, can it be held—even taking into view all that sort of evidence of so multifarious a nature to which they have referred, with so much anxiety, and which it would be an endless labour to go through, when contrasted, as it must be, with that to which the defenders appeal of the same character,—that it is proved that the Establishment principle, or duty of the state to maintain an endowed church as a scriptural doctrine, was held originally as a fundamental and essential tenet of the Relief church.

“ It appears to me that there is a failure of such proof, as it can only be inferred from the Relief Dissenters having adopted the Westminster Confession ; but which, as already observed, it may fairly be held, was adhered to merely as their creed in regard to doctrine and discipline, and not as an essential criterion of their sect.

“ There is the strongest grounds, on the other hand, for holding, that from the earliest period, and according to the opinions openly expressed by the most leading and influential members of the Relief church, this Establishment principle was not deemed an essential tenet, and that a latitude of opinion in regard to the point was permitted among the members of the Relief body, without their ever being called to account.

“ But, at any rate, it is enough, that in such circumstances the proof on the part of the defenders (if there is in truth any proof in the case), is as pregnant as that on the part of the pursuers, on whom it was undoubtedly incumbent to bring forward decisive and unequivocal evidence before they can prevail.”

Lord Medwyn concurred, and spoke on the same points as follows :—“ I have no occasion to discuss what is fundamental or not, as an article of faith of this religious body, and whether departure from any such religious tenet would warrant a forfeiture of this property. For if it be true that the original formation of the Relief presbytery, in 1761, was on account of patronage, and that the Campbelton congregation joined this body in 1767, on account of an alleged abuse of patronage (combined unquestionably with offence taken at the conduct of the presbytery of the Established church to which they were subject), and not from any notion that a church endowed by, and connected with, the state, was unscriptural ; and farther, although it be established, that the Relief synod have adopted, within more recent times, the opinion, that for the state to establish and endow a national church

is unscriptural, I cannot hold that this is such a departure from their religious principles—those principles applicable to this independent unendowed church, and which must, as long as it remains a separate church, *i. e.* the Relief church, continue inapplicable to, and unaffected by its members, for while separate from the Established church, there is no chance of a proposal to endow it, while they reject it—as to entitle the court to forfeit the property of those who adopt this opinion, and give it to those who think otherwise.

“It is true, when they separated from the National Church, and set up a separate one, they adhered to the doctrine and discipline of the Church of Scotland, as contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith. I cannot say that I am satisfied that, in this Confession, I can discover anything about endowment by the state, or that, in requiring subscription to this Confession, they went farther than what was applicable to themselves in it, as a separate church, adopting the doctrine and discipline of the Church of Scotland. In the case for the defenders, the portions of the Confession are given, which are said to import the endowment principle. But a state might do all there mentioned for the sake of policy and good government, without endowing a church. I am glad to find that, on this point, your lordship’s opinion concurs with mine. You are necessarily much better versed in these matters than I can be.\* I study such questions only as a judge in this court, and on such facts as are presented to me; and certainly the view I take is, that although, as I think, the Relief synod do hold the voluntary principle to be the scriptural one, and the Church of Scotland holds the endowment principle, it is not an article of faith as affecting the Relief church, to which such effect is to be given, as is here sought, by transferring the property of the church from the great majority, and these adhering to the Relief synod, to a small minority, who dissent from the synod. It is not every opinion held by the Church of Scotland, at the time the Westminster Confession was adopted, a departure from which will warrant the pursuers to insist, that if they retain the same opinions, they are entitled to the exclusive property of this church. The Confession contains the system of faith and discipline the Relief church adopted; but, by subscribing it, they can be sup-

\* Lord Medwyn belongs to the Episcopal church.

posed to have accepted it, only so far as applicable to themselves; and I should doubt whether they would admit "the presence of the civil magistrate in their assemblies, to provide that what is transacted in them is agreeable to the mind of God." All this may be done by a state without endowing a church. The one is not a necessary consequence of the other, nor of course implied in it.

"But farther, in a case of this kind, I think the religious opinions, departure from which is to forfeit the property purchased for, and acquired by, a religious body, must be such as characterized them in their own religious character, influencing their conduct as men and Christians in their state of separation; that no abstract opinion as to the belief or practice of any other religious community, which does not affect or influence any of their own religious principles, can have such an effect as to forfeit the property of the one part to the other. We must look to the principles of separation, not of agreement, with the Established church, which do not affect them as a religious body, the principles which produced the formation of this congregation in union with the Relief church; and I do not see that in any of their doctrines or religious principles, the synod, and those who adhere to them in this congregation, have deviated from the Confession as to any of them. I must, therefore, sustain the defences."

LORD MEADOWBANK having laid down the three propositions, already quoted, as containing the whole argument of the pursuers, proceeded regularly to discuss them.

"1. On the first of the three propositions—that it is a fundamental and essential part of the faith of the Church of Scotland, that the state shall maintain and endow that church—I entirely concur in the views which have been taken, and in so luminous a manner explained by your lordship. I never heard that, *spiritually* speaking, it was required in the Established church, that the principle of a religious establishment, in connection with, and endowed by, the state, should be professed as an article of its faith. Sure I am, not a word having any tendency to such a doctrine is to be found in any one of the recognised Confessions of Faith promulgated by the church, from the period of the Reformation down to the present hour. On the contrary, the whole history of those tenets, which our church has ever maintained, is hostile to such a principle, commencing with the declaration of belief respecting



‘The Kirk,’ in the 17th chapter of the Confession of Faith, recognised and enjoined by parliament, 1567, c. 3, which is utterly and entirely repugnant to every notice of this description. Renouncing all adherence to the *Church Malignant*, or Roman church, the kirk professed itself as the true church, which had existed from the beginning, but which assuredly had never been an *Established church*, or one endowed by the state. In fact, at its origin, our church laid no claim *jure divino*, to civil endowments. It would have been, considering the personages who were then its chief supporters, a very hazardous claim to have preferred. The great barons of Scotland were then engaged in the pillage of the Roman church; and, as matter of history, we know that it was not for many years that the founders of the Reformed faith could obtain from the rapacity of these lords of the congregation a miserable pittance for the parochial clergy.

“But, in truth, Knox and his brethren were too earnest in their spiritual warfare with the idolatries of the Roman worship, to think of establishments and endowments. Their thoughts were directed to the church universal; and it was not for years afterwards, as your lordships know, when they were in expectation of being assumed by parliament as the church of the realm, that endowments and benefices came to be in contemplation: but these, in truth, were subjects of *civil* consideration, and nothing regarding them could ever have been taken as a matter of spiritual belief. In short, my Lords, the fathers of our Confession of Faith knew too well what were the boundaries by which civil and ecclesiastical rights and subjects were separated, to confound them together in the way which we have very ignorantly been required to believe they did at the foundation of our national church. And I must confess, that it seems to me most singular and extraordinary, that such doctrines should be maintained in the face of those articles in that Confession to which your lordships referred, when we see that the church, in express terms, reserved to herself nothing but the power to determine controversies of faith, and ‘to handle or conclude nothing but that which is ecclesiastical, and not to intermeddle with civil affairs, except by HUMBLE petition, or by advice, if required by the civil magistrate;’ while, on the other hand, it even left to the latter authority and power to suppress heresies, and prevent corruptions. With these distinctions so clearly drawn, how that which is and can be solely the act of the civil government, namely, the form-

ing and endowing out of the funds of the state an Established church, when the power of interference with the proceedings of the magistrate was so expressly renounced, could, without gross inconsistency, have been made an article of spiritual faith, is, I confess, altogether unintelligible, and beyond my comprehension, no less than, I have no doubt, it was to those great Christian divines to whom, and to whose exertions, we owe our being a Protestant kingdom.

“Had it therefore been clear and indisputable, and I am not insinuating even that it is otherwise, that the original founders of this community had professed, without limitation, the doctrines and faith of the Church of Scotland, the pursuers must have proved, by other evidence than I have yet seen, that it was an abandonment of those doctrines upon the part of the presbyteries and synod of Relief, to profess that belief as to a church establishment which has been imputed to them, and which, in this view of the argument, I assume to have occurred. For if the church itself never held the establishment principle, as it has been here termed, to be an article of spiritual faith, so neither can it be reasonably contended that it was an original tenet of the Kirk of Relief, the abandonment of which would constitute a departure from, and violation of, the compact under which the community and its different branches were associated together.

“2. But had there been reason for believing that the creed of our church was different from what, upon this subject, there is no reasonable ground for doubting that it was, it would have required something more than what the pursuers have yet been able to exhibit, to induce any one to believe that this body of dissenters, when they abandoned the church as endowed and supported by the state, and formed among themselves a separate ecclesiastical community altogether unconnected with the government, and unendowed with the funds of the public, depending solely upon itself, and maintained exclusively by voluntary contribution, *exported along with them, and as an article of their spiritual faith, a belief that the church they had left was, by the fact of its being by law established and endowed, the true catholic church*, while they themselves being, in the strictest sense of the term, Voluntaries, formed a church, which, if not in the language of the Confession of Faith, a synagogue of Satan, was, at least, one that had degenerated, and become, to use the same language, a church of error. The notion, my Lords, seems so absurd as to

carry its own refutation along with it. Individuals might separate from the church *as Established*, on account of differing from the regulations or administration of its government, and might still believe in its being the true catholic church. But the very act of the formation of another church, with all the presbyterian forms of ecclesiastical judicatories, professing itself to be the church universal, itself separated from the state, and not endowed from its funds,—proclaimed in terms entirely unambiguous, that a belief in those qualifications formed no part of the faith which it professed. In short, no one looking to the constitution of such a body could, by possibility, understand that any thing else but the voluntary principle, or something strongly resembling it, was that which formed the basis of their Society.

“ Upon the whole of this matter I understand the fact to be, that like the Burgher Seceders, the Kirk of Relief professed all the tenets of the Church of Scotland, which are to be found in her Confession of Faith, and in her formulas; but it did not require a belief in the acts of the legislature, or in its provisions, which related to her establishment and endowment, but which carried along with them a condemnation of the separatists, as persons who had abandoned and renounced the only church recognised by parliament as true and catholic.

“ 3. But assuming that in these opinions your lordships and myself are erroneous, I can see not a vestige of evidence that the synod of Relief has *deviated* by any (if I may so term it) corporate act of their community from any one article of the faith which was originally professed by that community.—I have arrived at this conclusion, after a full and anxious consideration of every thing that is to be found in the most bulky and voluminous argument, which the pursuers have laid before us. But after all the investigation which I have been able to make, I cannot discover one resolution, either of the Relief presbytery or of the Relief synod, from which any deviation from the original profession of their faith has been indicated, or can by possibility be fixed down upon them. No doubt, my Lords, in some of these marvellous effusions, with extracts of which we have been favoured in such extraordinary abundance, your lordships will find plenty of doctrines maintained, both of a novel and singular description. But it does seem to me the most wonderful proposition that ever was maintained, that the tenets and professions of bodies, associated for a public and a lawful purpose, are to be sought for, not

in their own declarations and proceedings, but in the works and publications of individuals neither issued by their appointment, nor recognised by any act mentioned or authorized by them in their social capacity. Great indeed would be the hardship arising from the recognition of any such principle. There are few bodies associated for religious purposes, or for any purposes, who will not find some of their members imbued with speculations of their own, in which they will find no sympathy with the great mass of the Society.—I think it necessary, therefore, my Lords, to disclaim all reference to such sources of information as those which have been so abundantly opened up in the case for the reverend pursuer, and which, in considering this question, I felt myself compelled to throw aside altogether from my consideration.”

On the TITLE of Mr. Smith to keep possession of his church, and draw its emoluments after he had been cut off by the synod, their lordships made very short work. The Lord-justice-clerk said, “With regard to the alleged irregularities in the procedure before the presbytery and synod, in regard to the mode of setting Mr. Smith aside, as being in matters clearly connected with the discipline of the Relief church, it cannot be thought that this court can interfere. That point was ruled by Lord Braxfield’s decision in the case of Auchincloss, confirmed by the court.” Lord Medwyn added, “As to the case of Mr. Smith, so far as different from the case of the other pursuers, viewed as a case of discipline, should not the synod have been called to defend? But I see no such violation of their own forms, or of material justice, as to authorize the court to interfere in the sentence pronounced by his ecclesiastical superiors against him. Mr. Smith’s offence was virtually attempting to withdraw his congregation from the Relief secession, and by thus not adhering to his ordination vows, involving also contumacy, is purely a case of discipline, to which the case of Auchincloss directly applies.” Lord Meadowbank entered a little deeper into the futility of Mr. Smith’s claims, “I hold it to be clear, that if the synod of Relief, as a body, shall be held *not* to have departed from the fundamental tenets of their founders, Mr. Smith’s title to pursue this action is totally extinguished. Lord Mansfield said, long ago (as I formerly observed), that, in such cases, it is the right to the character and function of a clergyman, according to the rules of the sect, ‘which is the substance, and draws after it everything as a per-



tinient thereto. The use of the meeting-house and pulpit follows, by necessary consequence, the right to the function of the minister, preacher, or pastor; and, as the pursuer must, on that supposition, have been deprived of his function as a minister of the Relief church, by the authority recognised by this body of Dissenters, as its supreme ecclesiastical authority, having competent power to pronounce the sentence against him which they did, his title to pursue this action was thereby virtually subverted and destroyed." His lordship's last sentence was, "After what I have said, I need hardly add, that I am for sustaining the defences, and finding the pursuer liable in expenses."

The decision of their lordships, as already quoted, was received by the community in general, and particularly by Dissenters, with feelings of religious gratitude and with mutual congratulations, that the highest judicial tribunal of our country was the untarnished defender of the rights and privileges of Dissenters as well as of churchmen. The friends of Mr. Smith, indeed, seemed to be galled at the success of the Campbelton congregation. A circular was, accordingly, issued by the Rev. William Cunningham, of the College church, Edinburgh, of which the following is a copy:—*"Campbelton case.* You are requested to attend a meeting of those interested in the success of the pursuers, (Rev. Mr. Smith, and others,) who have unexpectedly lost their case, and been found liable in expenses by the decision of the Second Division of the Court of Session on Thursday last,—in the Institution-rooms, 13, Queen-street, on Monday the 10th instant, at two o'clock. William Cunningham, Edinburgh, 8th June, 1839."

By the advice of counsel, at this meeting, an appeal was resolved to be taken to the House of Lords, and to defray the expenses, printed subscription papers were issued, and various individuals came forward to assist in carrying it on. In one of the printed subscription papers lying on the table before the writer, the most of those who have put down their names were the leaders of the non-intrusion party in Edinburgh. The general subscription from the clergymen was five guineas each.\*

It now clearly appeared who were the persons ready to sacrifice their money in carrying on a process against the members of a Relief dissenting church. The most of them were to be found in the ranks of those who were contending for the sole Headship of

\* See Christian Journal. June, 1842.

Christ in his kingdom. At the meeting of the General Assembly in the preceding year, not a few of them had voted, “that it is declared in the Confession of Faith of this National Established Church, that the Lord Jesus Christ is King and Head of the church, and hath herein appointed a government in the hands of church officers distinct from the civil magistrate, and that, in all matters of teaching, doctrine, *discipline*, and *government of the church*, her *judicatories* possess an *exclusive jurisdiction* founded on the word of God,”—and farther, “that this spiritual jurisdiction, and the sole headship of the Lord Jesus Christ on which it depends, they will assert, and at all hazards defend; and finally, that they will firmly enforce obedience to the same upon all *office-bearers* and members of the church by the exercise of the laws of the ecclesiastical authority wherewith they are invested.”\* With an inconsistency which makes one almost ashamed of human nature, and which must have sprung from some motive never yet acknowledged, those very persons who claimed an exclusive jurisdiction for themselves, independent of the civil magistrate, could yet voluntarily take counsel and give money for the purpose of carrying on a process in which “the pursuers,” according to Lord Moncrieff, were anxiously maintaining, “that it was competent for the civil court to examine the proceedings of dissenting church courts as to their form and merits, and if not satisfied, to pronounce them illegal.” It is scarcely possible to refrain from feeling something akin to burning indignation against such conduct. Restraining everything like acrimonious abuse towards men occupying much of the public eye, and who certainly have many excellencies, it is yet deplorable that they should have tarnished their reputation by contending for the sole headship of Christ in their own church, and yet have lent themselves and given their money for the destruction of the sole headship of Christ in the church of Relief. The best of men will deceive themselves, and the wisest will be deceived; yet, according to their own principles, they were contending in the courts of law, at a vast expense of money, against the claims of Jesus—as Head over all for the good of his church.

Whatever those who carried on this process meant to accomplish, (and that is known to themselves,) it was remarkably overruled for good to the Dissenting interest in Scotland, and for

\* Minutes of Assembly.

the furtherance of the independence of the church of Christ throughout the different parts of the United Kingdom. It has now been settled as law, so far as legal decisions can settle it, that Dissenters may constitute a civil trust for the support of certain religious principles,—that such a trust may be connected with a body of men, or, in other words, with an ecclesiastical judicatory for carrying it on according to the fundamental principles of the sect or party,—that civil courts will not take cognizance of the determinations of these ecclesiastical judicatories as to matters of doctrine and discipline, but hold them *probatio probata* of the principles of the sect. Dissenting places of worship, and their pertinents, being of the nature of property, fall under the cognizance of the law of the land. This is right and proper. But no civil court can interfere with the doctrine of any religious party, if it does not interfere with the peace of the community; and every church may administer its own discipline upon its own members, without let or hinderance from any civil tribunal in the land. “These words are like apples of gold in pictures of silver.”

It cannot have escaped the mind of the attentive reader, that the judges acquired clearer views as to the rights of Dissenting church courts, according as these processes continued to be discussed at their bar. The first and the last interlocutor of Lord Moncrieff are very different from each other. Latterly he never hinted at making the church covenant at ordination a civil contract which the Court of Session was entitled to cognosce. And in the Inner House, where Lord Meadowbank sat with a mind matured and ripened on the principles of religious liberty, every judge on reflection ultimately acceded to the views which were at first by him so ably and luminously stated. While it is but fair to say that every judge, from first to last, acted at the time according to his legal knowledge and conscience; yet it is a matter of thankfulness, that Lord Meadowbank, who had studied and formed his opinions, concerning the relation of Dissenting church courts to the state when a very young barrister, should have been spared to give effect to them in the full maturity of his years, and at a moment of the greatest peril to the general liberties of the church of Christ—

“All her times shall ever be  
Ordered by his wise decree.”

There is one point which the action of declarator was mainly instrumental in fixing, and which is of very great importance to all religious denominations. It had previously indeed been fixed as law, in the case of Auchincloss, repeatedly referred to in the preceding pages, that the Court of Session would not interfere with the discipline of Dissenting church courts; and also, it had been fixed by the case of Aikman against Craigdallie, that, in the event of a division or change of opinion taking place in a church, the property went with the original doctrine of the sect, and not with numbers. But while this last principle had been laid down, it had not yet been applied, for even Lord Eldon himself could not discover any perceptible difference between the sentiments of the Old and New Light Burghers, called technically the case of Aikman against Craigdallie; and therefore he gave the churches to the larger body, who still called themselves the Secession synod. In the Campbelton case the principle—that church property went with doctrine—was first attempted to be applied in Scotland, and the question instantly presented itself, What is the amount of change which will warrant the Court of Session to denude one class of persons of their property and transfer it to others? All the judges agreed that the change must be *important*. Lord Medwyn said, “It must be no abstract opinion as to belief or practice of any other religious community, which does not affect or influence any of their own religious principles,” that can have “the effect of forfeiting their property.” Lord Meadowbank agreed that it must be something “which essentially changed the character of the tenets and faith originally professed:” according to the Latin phrase, “it must be a change *in essentialibus*.” Now such, it was held, was not the Establishment principle, for a church was a church of Christ whether Established or not. These were judicious maxims. They are amply calculated to retain church property to the original articles of belief for which it was built, and to prevent litigious people from carrying a church before the Court of Session on every little change and improvement of its antiquated forms. The same legal maxims have been given effect to in the great case of the Hewley Charity. The Unitarians have been stripped of the office of trustees, because Lady Hewley was an evangelical Presbyterian, and left her property for furthering such doctrines as she herself believed and professed; but in appointing new trustees, the English courts have taken them from the Indepen-



dents, and from two other bodies of Presbyterians, not strictly English Presbyterians at all. The Independents are indeed striving to have a change made in the appointment by getting more Independents nominated; but all this proceeds upon the principle, that mere church forms and modes of church government are not considered *in essentialibus*, and that the change which forfeits property must innovate in some way upon the great leading doctrines of Christianity.

The Campbelton decision has removed one barrier to the union of different dissenting churches, that are agreed about the great doctrines and ordinances of the gospel, and which merely differ from each other in lesser matters. Undoubtedly this process for a time served to retard the union between the Secession and Relief churches; but as the way is now legally clear, it is to be hoped that it will be pushed forward with vigour, cordially entered into by both parties, and that their efforts will be crowned with abundant success. There is no valid reason why they should keep asunder; and many are the arguments springing from expediency and scripture, why they should unite. What if it is pride, and not principle, that keeps them apart? "Blessed are the peace-makers, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

To open up the history of the Relief church anew, at the close of the Campbelton process, so happily brought to an end in 1839, and to go back again upon matters of general history from 1835, would not be wise. The events are too recent, and are only developing themselves. The effects destined to spring from them are yet in the loins of time. What was intended by the present writer has now been recorded; and some other hand will, at some future period, perhaps carry forward the narrative.

In taking a retrospective view of the Relief church, it is not seen to be faultless. It presents, like every institution conducted by weak and erring men, some things over which charity would fondly cast the ample folds of her mantle; but there are also numerous things about her to be commended, which are lasting memorials of the excellency of her office-bearers, and which clearly show that she has enjoyed no small share of the divine favour. Some other denominations set up altars with more flattering prospects of filling the land with their adherents than she at first did, and yet they have dwindled away almost to utter extinction, while she has gradually increased as to her influence upon the public mind, has penetrated into all parts of the coun-

try, and reared her churches in every city, town, and village, of Scotland. Gillespie followed no plans for gaining to himself a name, and increasing the number of his adherents. He did not agitate; he did not court popularity; he simply followed the dictates of his conscience, and honestly, yet fearlessly, sought the honour of Messiah the Prince. He stood seven years alone witnessing for the pure gospel and the liberty of Christ's people, and while all were expecting that his light would go out, Boston and Colier were sent to sustain and assist him in diffusing the evangelical and comprehensive principles which he had been taught of God to maintain.

The age required that witnesses should be raised up at the time on behalf of sound doctrine, catholic principles of communion, and the right of the Christian people to choose their own office-bearers, and they were provided by the King of Zion at the fit season. The Relief church, on the one hand, tended greatly to put an end to all mobbing and rioting, at the settlement of unpopular parish ministers, by simply opening up, at a small expense, a plan of *relief* from the galling yoke of patronage; and, on the other hand, it tended to check the Secession in their party terms of communion into which they had been unhappily driven by untoward circumstances, and to bring them back to the broad platform on which the Erskines had first organized their church. If the Relief has suffered considerably because she has been defective in denominational ardour, others have reaped largely the advantage of it. Instead of being the *bone* of contention, she has been the *cement* which has bound together the living stones in the temple of God. She acknowledged those on the right and left hand, as brethren, who would not acknowledge each other, and thus strove successfully to promote unity and peace. Her principles of free communion have often been urged against her, but in many quarters they have also pled strenuously for her, and procured for her friends, where the people loved the pure gospel rather than party peculiarities. At this era, (1839,) the solitary church of 1752 has multiplied and increased into the goodly number of 115, many of them also being among the largest churches in Scotland. Her ministers have preached the gospel faithfully and affectionately to thousands of grave attentive worshippers. As a body they have been void of ostentation. They have held on, as useful clergymen should do, in the noiseless tenor of their way, and been much given to cultivate humility and peace. Their

voice, as enthusiasts or noisy disputants, has seldom or never been heard in the land.

According to their number and means they have uniformly countenanced the claims of civil and religious liberty, and equally stood in the breach when the citadel of freedom was assailed by despotism or licentiousness. They have allowed no Diotrephes in their churches to monopolize the privileges of the people of God. Bible, missionary, and charitable societies have all obtained their countenance and aid. Sabbath schools and congregational libraries are to be found throughout all their borders. Scarcely a church in the denomination is without them. In accordance with their catholic principles, they have patronized those missionary societies most that are founded on a liberal basis. Several of their licentiates are labouring with success as missionaries in connection with the London and Glasgow African Missionary Societies. A very considerable number of their young ministers have gone both to Canada and the United American States, but they have never thought of setting up a party in either of these countries, as the American presbyterian church is so entirely formed on Relief principles, and receives Relief licentiates at once into her bosom. Relief ministers, in all places wheresoever they reside, are like corner-stones to lay hold on other living stones, and build and bind together the whole church of the redeemed into one beautiful whole.

In forecasting the future prospects of the church of Relief, it is impossible to speak with anything like certainty. The scene is likely to become bright or gloomy according to the feelings at the time of him who would scan the future. There are clouds in the horizon; but whether they will break in the way of mercy or of judgment, human wisdom cannot divine. The Establishment, Secession, and some other churches, are now all but occupying the ground on which the Relief church was accustomed to stand alone. The liberalizing influence of political events, together with increasing knowledge, are fast assimilating them all into her likeness. They have, besides, more ample resources. They are bestowing their money in hundreds of thousands to increase their church accommodation. They are rejoicing also in the liberty—liberty new to them—wherewith Christ has made his people free; and if the Relief church does not emulate them in her gifts of silver and gold, to set her churches, like theirs, free of debt, while yet *they* are emulating her in contending for sound doctrine, the rights of the people, and the prin-

ciples of free communion, she is in great danger of being huddled into a corner, and perhaps of being altogether forgotten. She will be wanting, however, in generosity and Christian patriotism, if she allows herself to be smothered and overlaid, when she has within her pale resources fully equal to the maintenance and spread of her principles. The dew that falls upon mount Zion falls alike on the humble flower and the towering oak, and she should unfold her beauties and take courage.

The synod has now an excellent theological hall for the instruction of candidates for the office of the ministry. Her pulpits are mostly filled by young men in the very prime of life. The public are neither deaf nor blind to sound doctrine, consistency of character, and a laborious life. To win souls in any rank of society is the highway to win a lofty place in the nation's heart. Christianity made its way at first amid those who were literally called the *people*; and now, though the gold ring may not sparkle in the pews, nor the smart chariot wait by the porches of Relief churches, yet these things, though greatly gloried in by some, tell very little upon the success of a true church of Christ. Saints are the salt of the earth, and the possession of them renders a church indestructible and glorious. The church of Philadelphia "had a little strength, and kept the word" of Jesus; "and I," said he, "have set before thee an open door, and no man shall shut it." Pastors, learned, humble, pious, and scriptural in their mode of preaching the doctrines of the cross,—elders, faithful, watchful, and affectionate, to guide the flock and bind up their wounds,—a roll of communicants, all enrolled in the Lamb's book of life, are the true elements of a church's stability and greatness; and these, without boasting, are not wanting in the Relief denomination any more than in the best conditioned churches in the land. Legal combinations and aristocratic influence have been joined hand in hand against her, and she has no doubt often suffered from her own want of fidelity and zeal; yet still she continues to lift up her head, and stands upon the same great principles of TRUTH, LIBERTY, and LOVE, on which she was founded, by her venerated fathers. "Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down: not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken: but there the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein



shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby. For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king ; he will save us."

## A P P E N D I X.

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### I.

*Reasons of the dissent, entered on the 15th of May, 1751, from the sentence of the General Assembly, censuring the Rev. members of the presbytery of Linlithgow, for not executing the sentences of former Assemblies, appointing them to ordain and admit Mr. James Watson, minister of the parish of Torphichen.*

1. WHATEVER privileges the Church of Scotland has by law, these can never make her a merely voluntary, or merely legal society, so as to be governed only by rules of her own making, or only by civil laws, or by both together: but she must still be reckoned a part of the church of Christ, of which he alone is Lord and King; and which has a government, appointed by him, distinct from the civil magistracy; and all the members of it are to be subject to his laws alone, absolutely and without reserve. And therefore we think the censures of the church are never to be inflicted, but upon open transgressors of the laws of Christ himself, its only lawgiver: nor can we think that any man is to be constructed an open transgressor of the laws of Christ, merely for not obeying commands of any assembly of fallible men; when he declares it was a conscientious regard to the will of Christ himself, according to the best of his understanding of it, that led him to this disobedience. And therefore this decision of the Assembly seems to us a stretch of power, derogatory to the rights of conscience, of which God alone is Lord; and to the sole absolute authority of Christ in his church.

2. We have always, from our first entrance into this church, conceived, that Presbyterian government, as distinguished from all other forms of church-government, consisted in the parity of pastors and subordination of church judicatures; as it is described, both in the form of our subscription, and in the laws of our establishment; without implying that even the supreme judicature was vested with absolute authority or infallibility, or that an active obedience without reserve was to be given to its decisions; which we could never imagine to be a principle tenable by any Christian Protestant church. Accordingly, our subscription, and engagement to obedience and submission to the judicatures of this church, is with the express limitation of its being *in the Lord*; that is, in such cases only as we judge not to be disagreeable to the will of the Lord: of which every man has an unalienable right to judge for himself, as he will be answerable to the Lord: a right which he cannot give up to any man or society of men; because it is not merely his privilege but his indispensable duty: whereas this sentence, and the reasoning in support of it, seem to imply, that not one instance of declining, in the humblest manner, actively to obey, can be tolerated in the church.

3. Because we conceive that this sentence was by no means necessary to support the constitution and authority of the church. These are well secured, so long as the execution of the sentences of the supreme court may take place in many different ways, without bearing hard on the consciences of such as do not see with the eyes of the majority; or rather, who think what is commanded not only unlawful in itself, but sinful in them to execute.

WILL. WISHART, D. D., Principal of the College of Edinburgh,  
and other twenty-two ministers.

## II.

## REASONS OF DISSENT.

As the reasons of dissent from the judgment of the commission resolving to inflict no censure on the Presbytery of Dunfermline for their disobedience in relation to the settlement of Inverkeithing—usually called the Manifesto of the Moderate party—are to be found at length in the Scots Magazine for 1752, pp. 191—197; and also have been lately republished in the Rev. Mr. Morren's Annals of the Assembly, vol. i. p. 121, it does not appear necessary to load the pages of this Appendix with anything more than a few selections expressive of the turning points of the document. To the general reader this will simplify the matter, and the closer student of history can turn to the sources pointed out, which are of easy access.

1. Because we conceive this sentence of the commission to be inconsistent with the nature and first principles of society.—In a numerous society it seldom happens that all the members think uniformly concerning the wisdom and expedience of any public regulation; but no sooner is that regulation enacted, than private judgment is so far superseded, that even they who disapprove of it are notwithstanding bound to obey it, and to put it in execution if required, unless in a case of such gross iniquity and manifest violation of the original design of the society, as justifies resistance to the supreme power, and makes it better to have the society dissolved, than to submit to established iniquity. Such extraordinary cases we can easily conceive there may be, as will give any man a just title to seek the dissolution of the society to which he belongs, or at least will fully justify his withdrawing from it. But as long as he continues in it, professes regard for it, and reaps the emoluments of it, if he refuses to obey its laws, he manifestly acts both a disorderly and dishonest part: he lays claim to the privileges of the society, whilst he contemns the authority of it; and by all principles of reason and equity is justly subjected to its censures. . . .

2. Because this sentence of the commission, as it is subversive of society in general; so, in our judgments, it is absolutely inconsistent with the nature and preservation of ecclesiastical society in particular.—It is very evident, that unless the church were supported by continual miracles, and a perpetual and extraordinary interposition of Heaven, it can only subsist by those fundamental maxims by which all society subsists. "A kingdom divided against itself cannot stand." There can be no union, and, by consequence, there can be no society, where there is no subordination: and, therefore, since miracles are now ceased, we do conceive that no church or ecclesiastical society can exist, without obedience required from its members, and enforced by proper sanctions. It has, indeed, been asserted,— "That the censures of the church are never to be inflicted but upon open transgressors of the laws of Christ himself; and that no man is to be constructed an open transgressor of the laws of Christ, (merely) for not obeying the commands of any assembly of fallible men, when he declares it was a conscientious regard to the will of Christ that led him to this disobedience." [Wishart's Reasons in the Torphichen Case.] This is called asserting liberty of conscience, and supporting the rights of private judgment; and upon such reasonings the Rev. Commission proceeded in coming to that decision of which we now complain. But we think ourselves called upon to say, and we say it with concern, that such principles as these appear to us calculated to establish the most extravagant maxims of Independency, and to overthrow from the very foundation that happy ecclesiastical constitution which we glory in being members of, and which we are resolved to support. For upon these principles no church whatever, consisting, as every church on earth must consist, of *fallible* men, has right to inflict any censure on any disobedient person. Let such person only think fit, boldly to use the name of conscience; and, sheltered under its authority, he acquires at once a right of doing whatsoever is good in his own eyes. If anarchy and confusion follow, as no doubt they will, there is, it seems, no remedy. We are sorry to say, that brethren who profess to hold such principles, ought to have acted more consistently with them, and not to have joined themselves to any church, till once they had found out an assembly of *infallible* men, to whose authority they would have acknowledged submission to be due. We think it very consistent with conscience, for inferiors to disapprove in their own mind of a judgment given by a superior court, and yet to put that judgment in execution, as the deed of their superiors, for conscience' sake; seeing we humbly conceive it is, or ought to be, a matter of conscience with

every member of the church, to support the authority of that church to which he belongs. . . .

3. Because we conceive the sentence of the commission to be not only inconsistent with church-government in general, but in a particular manner inconsistent with Presbyterian church-government, which we have acknowledged to "be founded upon, and agreeable to the word of God."—The two capital articles by which Presbytery is distinguished from every other ecclesiastical constitution, are the parity of its ministers, and the subordination of its judicatures. By the one, the church is preserved from exercising that lordship and dominion over our brethren which is condemned by our Saviour, and which is inconsistent with that liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free. By the other, we guard against that anarchy and confusion which is the unavoidable consequence of the Independent system.—Wherever there is a subordination of courts, there is one that must be supreme; for subordination were in vain, if it did not terminate in some last resort. We do not pretend to vest any court with infallibility; but we cannot help being surprised, that any of our brethren should have been at a loss to conceive this plain and obvious principle, that it is essential to the very idea of a supreme judicature, that its decisions be absolute and final. Such a supreme judicature by our constitution is the General Assembly of the church; and, therefore, if the decisions of the General Assembly may be disputed and disobeyed by inferior courts with impunity, we apprehend the Presbyterian constitution to be entirely overturned. There is no occasion for this church to meet in its General Assemblies any more; our government is at an end; it totters from the very basis; and we are exposed to the contempt and scorn of the world, as a church without union, order, or discipline, destitute of strength to support its own constitution, falling into ruins by the abuse of liberty. Our wiser ancestors took the proper steps to guard against such dangers. They established solemn subscriptions and engagements to bind the ministers of the church to obedience and submission to its judicatures; which engagements, as they continue to this day, we heartily wish were more attended to and regarded. . . .

### III.

#### ANSWERS.

*Answers to the Reasons of Dissent from the Sentence of the Commission in the case of Inverkeithing, March 11, 1752; drawn up by the Committee appointed for that purpose, and dated May 16.*

—WE shall not now insist upon it, that to assert an absolute unlimited authority in the supreme powers in every society, and apply it to ecclesiastical government, would be raising church-power to as high a pitch of dominion, as ever he pretended to, whom the Canon law calls, *Dominus Deus noster Papa*; but whom the apostle Paul characterizes, as *opposing and exalting himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped*; so that he as *GOD sitteth in the temple of GOD, showing himself that he is GOD*. But we must here observe, that such doctrine would carry the matter of obedience to the supreme powers in civil society, much farther than the highest patrons of the most absolute passive obedience and non-resistance generally do; who, at least, allow people this *hard choice*; either *actively*, to obey all commands of the sovereign; or *passively*, to submit to his will, and to whatever punishments he may please to inflict for disobedience. But to assert, that active obedience, in *all* cases, without reserve, and without asking questions, is to be paid to the supreme powers, even in civil society, is scarce to be paralleled, but by some expressions of ranting writers, and an Act of the Parliament of Scotland, in the reign of K. James VII. *Parl. 1. Sess. 1. Act. 2*, where the estates of Parliament declare, "That our Kings are invested with *absolute* authority; and that they abhor and detest all principles and positions, which are contrary and derogatory to the King's sacred, supreme, *absolute* power and authority; and that they hold themselves obliged—to assure all his enemies,—that they are firmly resolved to give their entire obedience to his Majesty, *without reserve*."

The Dissenters, indeed, do not go quite so far as to assert, that inferiors are, in *all* cases, to obey or execute the orders of their superiors, without some *distinction*. They favour us with *one* exception, and *one only*. They plainly and expressly declare, That "no sooner is a regulation enacted by the legislative power



in society,—than even they who disapprove of it, are, notwithstanding, *bound* to obey it, and to put it in execution, if required; UNLESS in a case of such *gross* iniquity, and manifest violation of the original design of the society, as justifies *resistance* to the supreme power, and makes it better to have the society dissolved, than to *submit* to established iniquity.” So that now it *comes fairly out*, That “let any the most *atrocious iniquity*, any the most *heinous sin* against God, be enjoined by the legislative power on private persons; which yet does not warrant their seeking the dissolution of the society, or their withdrawing from it; they *must* obey the iniquitous command, without asking questions.” This is *such* doctrine, from *ministers* and *office-bearers* in this church, as no man needs attempt to expose, further than it exposes itself.

II. The second reason of the dissent is, That “this sentence of the Commission is absolutely inconsistent with the nature and preservation of ecclesiastical society in particular.” Here the Dissenters declare, That they “join with *all* Protestants, in acknowledging the Lord Jesus Christ to be the only King and Head of his church;” and yet, not many lines after, they “think themselves called upon to say, and they say it *with concern*, that *such principles as these*,—‘That the censures of the church are never to be inflicted, but upon open transgressors of the laws of Christ himself; and that no man is to be constructed an open transgressor of the laws of Christ, (merely) for not obeying the commands of any Assembly of fallible men, when he declares it was a conscientious regard to the will of Christ that led him to this disobedience;’—that such principles appear to them calculated to establish the most extravagant maxims of Independency, and to overthrow that church-constitution, of which they glory in being members, from the very foundation.” For our part, we own it gives us *very great concern*, to see such principles as these impugned, and so *keenly* too, by any who profess to be *members* of any Christian church; far more, who bear the character of *ministers* of the gospel.

If we consider all the rules and directions of our blessed Saviour, or his apostles, concerning church-discipline, we may be abundantly satisfied, that the actions or neglects of men, being transgressions of the laws of Christ, and open and scandalous transgressions too, is the only view in which they fall under the censures of his church, properly so called: and from these rules every one may *more easily* learn “what the censures of the church are, and what the crimes against which they are directed;” than by being sent so far about as the dissenters would have us go, “to the constitution of every church,” to learn them. There may indeed be another power granted to some part of the church by the civil government, and the laws of the land. When *they* annex civil emoluments to the office of ministers in the church, on certain terms and conditions, they may trust the judicatures of the church with judging who come up to these terms, or who come short of them, or fall off from them; and, accordingly, admitting men to partake of these legal advantages, or excluding them from them. But in the exercise of this power, *except* in so far as the actions which fall under their cognizance are transgressions of the law of Christ, as well as of the laws of the land, they act not so properly the part of ministers of Christ, inflicting church-censures, as that of trustees of the public, executing those laws of the land which are intrusted or left to their execution. For the power given to his ministers by Christ has nothing to do with giving or taking away civil privileges and emoluments. For which reason, a humane, and far more a Christian spirit, would lead men to exercise this power given them by law, with all the tenderness and lenity which the civil government will permit; instead of taking advantage of it to deprive men of their legal privileges and benefices, or take steps tending that way, upon *frivolous pretences*. It is certainly most becoming ministers of the gospel, and office-bearers in Christ’s church, to exercise *any* power intrusted to them, with *all* the prudence and tenderness they can; and with a sacred regard to those laws of Christ, which lay a great stress upon *forbearance*, and avoiding to *lay a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall in our brother’s way*. Nothing can be more unbecoming *them*, than to exercise the power intrusted to them by the state, in an arbitrary way; to do hard things just because they *dare*, and have the sanction of the law with them: to stretch a law they *all* call a *hard* one; and thus make it, in many cases, *harder* than the legislature has made it. And scarce anything could be more absurd, than to turn men out of their benefices, for not acting contrary to principles, in which they are supported by standing rules of the church: or to use this power contrary to what may *reasonably* be presumed to be the design of the law, in bestowing legal emoluments upon ministers; *viz.*, that they are given by the law with a view of some service to religion and the public, to be done for them.

The Dissenters may well be *sorry to say it*; for, in reality, it is a *woful saying*, "That brethren, who profess to hold such principles (as the two above-mentioned) ought not to have joined themselves to *any church*, till once they had found out an assembly of *infallible men*." Why, truly, despairing of ever finding out such an assembly, we thought ourselves safe in joining ourselves to a *fallible church*, honestly *professing* to be so; and where the terms of communion, required of us at our entry, appeared to us to contain nothing disagreeable to the will of God and Christ, little expecting that, many years after some of us had joined ourselves to it, any of its members should rise up, and plead in good earnest what *Sir Richard Steele* has been found fault with for saying in a jocular way,—“That though she *could err*, yet she never *did*; or, at least, plead for such an absolute, unreserved, *active obedience* to all her injunctions, as can only be due to assemblies of *infallible men*; or of whom, at least, we are sure that they never *have erred*, and never *will*.” The Dissenters say, “They allow to the right of private judgment all the extent and obligation that reason or religion require.” But the misfortune is, we know of no *priests beyond the sea* but who may *say* as much, while they never think fit to tell us *what* that extent and obligation is. We agree with them, that “no man’s private judgment gives him a right to disturb, with impunity, *all public order*;” nor can we ever apprehend, that a Christian or a minister’s following his best private judgment, concerning the will of God and Christ, will be the *real cause* of the disturbance of *public order* in the church; however, by those who contend for an *absolute* authority in its judicatures, and obedience without reserve to *all* their decisions, it may, very innocently on its part, be *made the occasion* of it.—

III. The third reason of dissent is, That “the sentence of the Commission is, in a particular manner, inconsistent with Presbyterian church-government.” The nature of that government, as “distinguished from every other ecclesiastical constitution,” and particularly from the *Independent system*, is described, in the formula which all ministers subscribe, to be “the government of this church, by Kirk-sessions, Presbyteries, Provincial Synods, and General Assemblies.” The excellency of that *subordination* appears to us to lie, not in the power of church-courts to distress their brethren, but in access which parties have, when they think themselves injured, to seek redress, by *appeals* to the superior courts; who, no doubt, have power to take the *execution*, as well as the *judgment*, into their own hands, when particular circumstances point out the expediency of their doing so.

The Dissenters say, “They do not pretend to *vest* any court with infallibility; but they cannot help being surprised that any of their brethren should have been at a loss to conceive this plain and obvious principle, “That it is essential to the very idea of a supreme judicature that its decisions be *absolute* and *final*.” “That they be *final*, so as to be reversible *only* by themselves,” we have already declared we are at *no loss* to conceive; but as to their being *absolute*, so as *all* of them are to be actively obeyed, without reserve or exception, we must still be the objects of the surprise of the Dissenters; for we are so far from being able to conceive it to be a plain and obvious principle, That *this* is “essential to the very idea of a supreme judicature,” that we rather apprehend it *essentially contrary* to the very idea of any court not vested with infallibility. . . .

It is said, “It shows the weakness of our church constitution, not to be able *always* to bring the sentences of its judicatures into execution in the most *constitutional* way; but, passing over the presbytery, whose immediate duty it is to admit a minister to his charge, to appoint others to do their work.” Why, this may indeed show, that our constitution is not *almighty*: that it partakes of the weaknesses and infirmities common to *all* human constitutions whatsoever, that they cannot *always* accomplish their designs in the *shortest* and most direct way; but must sometimes take more round-about ways of doing it, provided they be lawful ones. And is such a consequence as this to be put in the balance, with either depriving valuable and useful men of their charges, and the church of their usefulness; or laying hard temptations before any men, to violate and debauch their consciences? the very *worst* purpose that ever power or authority was, or can be applied to!

#### IV.

*Resolution of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, 22d May, 1736, upon the Report of their Commissioners sent to London, to endeavour the Repeal of the Act, 10mo Annæ, reimposing Patronages.*

THE General Assembly having taken to their serious and deliberate consideration,

the report of the commissioners from the last General Assembly sent to London, to apply for redress of the grievance of Patronage; and that in order to deliberate what resolution was proper for this Assembly or this Church to take, as to their future conduct with relation to this grievance; did thereupon agree upon this opinion and resolution, that the Church of Scotland is, by her duty and interest, obliged still to persist in using her best endeavours from time to time to be relieved from the grievance of patronage, until the same shall, by the blessing of God, prove successful; and, for that end, that this Assembly shall empower and direct the Commission to be appointed by them, to make due application to the king and parliament for redress of the said grievance, in case a favourable opportunity for so doing shall occur during the subsistence of that commission: and this Assembly doubts not, that future General Assemblies of this church will from time to time be watchful and attentive to this weighty concern, and will not fail to make the like proper applications, whenever, by the providence of God, a fit occasion shall offer itself. And as the intent of such applications are in order to procure to be restored to this church a valuable right and privilege she was possessed of at the union of the two kingdoms, so the grounds and reasons of the claim of this church to be restored to the enjoyment of that right are so strong and pregnant, that, notwithstanding the unsuccessful event of the late applications, this Assembly cannot but hope that some like application, renewed at a proper season, will prove successful: and in order to set forth some of the reasons of their hopes, and to direct their commission as to the manner of such application, if they shall see cause to make any, the Assembly has resolved and agreed, that the grounds of this church's claim for the redress of the grievance of patronage are, among others, these following:

That in the Declaration of the Estates of the kingdom of Scotland in April 1689, containing the claim of right, and the offer of the crown to their majesties, King William and Queen Mary, it is among other things, for vindicating their ancient rights and liberties, declared, that prelacy in the church has been a great and unsupportable grievance and trouble to this nation, and contrary to the inclinations of the generality of the people ever since the Reformation, and therefore ought to be abolished.

That, in pursuance of this claim of right, several acts of parliament were made soon after the late happy Revolution, comprehending the establishment of this church in its doctrine, worship, discipline, and government; and particularly by the 5th act passed on the 7th of June, 1690, ratifying the Confession of Faith, and settling Presbyterian church-government, the same is expressly made in pursuance of the said article in the claim of right. And as the said 5th act contains, among other things, an express ratification of the 1st act of the parliament 1592, which act, in the close thereof, makes a proviso for presbyteries being obliged to receive qualified ministers presented by patrons; therefore, in the reviving, renewing, and confirming of this act, that article thereof relating to patronages is excepted, and it is declared, that the same shall thereafter be taken into consideration: which shows evidently, that patronages were not understood to be consistent or agreeable with that constitution of this church, which the legislature were then about to establish, in pursuance of the claim of right, and in compliance with the inclinations and principles of the generality of the people in Scotland.

That accordingly, soon after this 5th act 1690, the 23d act concerning patronages was passed on the 19th July in that same session of parliament; which annuls the power of patrons of presenting ministers, and thereby prevents the thrusting ministers upon congregations; and establishes another method of supplying vacant churches, which then became a part of the legal establishment of this church in pursuance of the claim of right, being a supplement to that which was reserved to further consideration by the 5th act 1690; and at the same time a valuable equivalent was given by that act to the patrons in lieu of their power of presenting.

That the establishment of this church, which was thus renewed at the happy Revolution, was confirmed and secured in the most solemn manner at the union of the two kingdoms; particularly by the 6th Act 1707, which confirms the said act 1690, with the hail other acts of parliament relating thereto, in prosecution of the claim of right: and provides, That the government of this church, as established by the foresaid acts of parliament pursuant to the claim of right, shall remain and continue unalterable. Which act is, by the parliaments of both kingdoms, ratified, and declared to be a fundamental and essential condition of the union in all time coming; and which appears evidently to comprehend the said 23d act 1690, which was certainly one of the acts, and, next to the 5th act of that



session, was the principal act of parliament made in pursuance and in prosecution of the said article of the claim of right.

That notwithstanding the security of this our happy Establishment, in all its parts, was as great and as solemn as it was possible for human laws and constitutions to devise or execute, yet in prejudice of that security, as we apprehend, the act in the 10th year of Queen Anne was passed, restoring to patrons the power of presenting, and suffering them at the same time to retain the valuable equivalent which they received by the 23d act 1690. And this act 10mo Annæ, it is well known, and always has been declared, was imposed upon this church by means of persons of our own country, who were enemies to the Protestant succession, as they soon after discovered in the strongest manner, and enemies to this church by reason of her inviolable adherence to that succession, and was by them intended to afflict and oppress this church, and to create discontents amongst the people therein, and to open a door for patrons arbitrarily to impose upon the people, as ministers, persons proper for instilling into their minds principles of disloyalty and disaffection to the present happy constitution. Which circumstance of the season and design of imposing this grievance, which appears to us an infringement on our established constitution, must ever afford an additional argument and encouragement in our applications to the royal family now reigning, and whom we daily pray God ever to preserve and prosper.

That accordingly, not long after the accession of his late Majesty of blessed memory, commissioners were sent up from this church to make humble applications to his Majesty for redress of this grievance of patronages, and other grievances which this church complained of; which commissioners had the honour of access to and audience of his Majesty, and received a most gracious answer, "That he was well satisfied of the good affection of the Church of Scotland, and should be glad of an occasion to serve them." And the same commissioners had likewise the honour of an audience of their present Majesties, then Prince and Princess of Wales; of whom the former was graciously pleased to answer, "That he would do all he could for the interest of this church, and of this country in general:" and the then Princess was pleased to answer, "That she was satisfied of the good disposition of the Church of Scotland to the Protestant succession, and would not be wanting in what might be for its advantage." After which there was somewhat done for the alleviating of this grievance of patronage, by an act passed in the 5th year of his late Majesty: but by experience it has been since found, that that act of parliament has proved insufficient for giving that relief to the church which we apprehend was intended by it; but, on the contrary, as the grievous consequences of presentations have since that time increased, and are felt very sensibly in many parts of this church, it was justly thought necessary lately to renew applications to his Majesty; and we think it still most just and fit, upon the first favourable occasion that the providence of God shall offer, humbly to apply to his Majesty and the parliament for redress of this grievance, being hopeful that the same may be successful when we shall have full access to represent the merits of the case, and particularly that this grievance was brought upon us contrary to the establishment of this church, made at the glorious Revolution, and solemnly confirmed and secured as an essential condition of the union of the two kingdoms.

## V.

### LIST OF PAMPHLETS OCCASIONED BY THE DEPOSITION OF GILLESPIE.

In support of the Assembly's procedure, there appeared—

1. "A Just View of the Constitution of the Church of Scotland, and of the Proceedings of the last General Assembly in relation to the Deposition of Mr. Gillespie."—Anonymous, but understood to be written by the Rev. Mr. Hyndman, Edinburgh.

2. "The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland Vindicated."—Edinburgh: 1753.

3. "Thoughts relating to that Submission and Obedience due to the Authority and Decisions of the Supreme Judicature of the Church. In two Letters from one Clergyman to another."—Edinburgh: 1753.

4. "A Friendly Admonition to such Well-Meaning and Conscientious Persons as have already Joined, or incline to Join, the Secession from the Church of Scotland."—Edinburgh: 1753.



Against the decision of the Assembly, and in support of Mr. Gillespie, there appeared—

1. "A Letter from a Gentleman in Town to his Friend in the Country."—Edinburgh: 1752.
2. "A Letter from several Elders, Lovers of Peace and Moderation, to their Brethren of the same Principles."—August, 1752.
3. "A Loud Cry for Help to the Struggling Church of Scotland."—Glasgow: 1753. It is signed "X. Y., Tallow Chandler," and dated "from my Shop in the Candleriggs, January 15, 1753." This is a faint cover for the Rev. Mr. M'Laurin, who exerted himself strenuously in this cause. He was a preaching *elder*, and his *shop*, or church where he dispensed light, was in the Candleriggs.
4. "The Terms of Ministerial and Christian Communion," by the same.
5. "The Nature of Ecclesiastical Government," by the same.
6. "An Inquiry into the Powers committed to the General Assemblies of the Church, and the Nature of Deposition." The Preface by Mr. M'Laurin. The body of the pamphlet by a minister who published, in the Scots Mag., 1752, a Paper of Questions about the Deposition of Gillespie, and who signs himself, T. G——n.
7. An anonymous answer was also published by two different hands to the "Just View," and "The Vindicator."
8. "A Juster View of the Constitution of the Church."
9. "Private Judgment Defended, or the Lawfulness and Duty of Refusing Obedience to the Highest Church Judicatures when their commands are judged unlawful."

It was in answer, likewise, to Hyndman's pamphlet that Wotherspoon published his famous pamphlet, "Ecclesiastical Characteristics." His speech before the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr, when challenged for being its author, throws light on the subject. He afterwards, in 1763, published his "Serious Apology for the Ecclesiastical Characteristics."

Gillespie's case was discussed in "An Alarm to the Church of Scotland," 1771; understood to be written by his friend, Mr. Walker, Dundonald; and in "A Vindication of the Discipline and Constitution of the Church of Scotland," also by Mr. Walker. To the last he put his name.

That the pamphlets we have assigned to Mr. M'Laurin were written by him, is evident from his Life by Gillies prefixed to his Sermons, and from his identifying himself in them as the same author who had published a Letter on the unreasonableness of extending Chapter VII. of the Form of Process to Probationers. This is well known to have been his.

## VI.

### A COMPENDIOUS VIEW OF THE RELIGIOUS SYSTEM MAINTAINED AND TAUGHT BY THE SYNOD OF RELIEF. BY THE REV. PATRICK HUTCHISON.

It is not intended in this small treatise to give a description of all the doctrines and truths of the word of God. This would be a work of much time and labour. All that is designed is to bring a variety of the capital points of the Christian system into a narrow compass, to which the other parts of divine truth are reducible and analogous; that the reader may, in a short connected series, have a clear apprehension of divinity, as it is contained in the sacred records, and what is the strain of preaching among the Relief ministers, who are represented by professed witnesses for truth as *deluding* the generation, and *relieving* them from the yoke of Christ.

The great primary radical truth revealed in scripture, and the foundation of all religion, is the existence of God. On this great truth all other truths in the divine oracles are built, and were this foundation sapped and the existence of Deity destroyed, all religion would be banished out of the world.

The knowledge of God's existence in the unity of his essence is attainable by the light of nature, by surveying these indelible characters and impressions of divinity, which appear in the material system. So congenial is the belief of Deity to the human mind, and such excellent monitors of his existence are the works of his hands, that no nation has ever been known entirely destitute of the knowledge of a supreme Being, though those only, who enjoyed the benefit of a divine revelation, know how to worship him in an acceptable manner.

But though mankind, by the light and improvements of reason, can attain the knowledge of God's being, and the Oneness of his essence, they cannot by this medium of information attain the knowledge of three distinct subsistences, or personalities, in the same divine essence.

A Trinity of persons in the unity of the divine essence is a branch of knowledge attainable only by divine revelation. And to those who are acquainted in any tolerable degree with the inspired oracles, this truth is clear as a sunbeam, so that he that runs may read it.

In the beginning of the book of inspiration we are informed of the creation of all things by God, and particularly of the creation of *man*, the noblest part of his works in this lower world, whom, in subordination to himself as his supreme Lord, he placed over the other works of his hands. All the creatures in this world were subjected to him, birds of the air, beasts of the field, and whatsoever moveth in the paths of the sea.

The first man was called Adam, a name expressive of his original, as formed out of the dust of the earth, to teach him humility, and dependence on God. His Creator breathed into him the breath of life, and he became a living person. Besides the essential faculties of his soul, he was brightly adorned with the image of God, and possessed as much knowledge of the divine nature and will as was suitable to his condition as an innocent creature, together with sufficient power to do his duty. God made him upright, having his will in perfect subjection to his heavenly enlightened mind, and his affections placed upon the supreme good.

Being formed after the image of God, and adorned with his fair resemblance, God entered into a covenant with him, as the public head of that numerous family, who were to spring from him by ordinary generation. For his accommodation, God placed him in paradise, where he had every thing entertaining to the sight, and pleasing to the taste, under the easy restriction of abstaining from the tree of knowledge of good and evil: which prohibition was intended to manifest his Creator's just authority over him, and to be the trial of his virtue and obedience. A severe threatening was denounced if he transgressed the royal mandate of heaven, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." This threatening was equally to affect him and his posterity. At the same time, the threatening of death upon transgression implied a promise of life to Adam and his posterity, if he had performed the condition of the covenant, by yielding perfect and persevering obedience during the time appointed for the continuance of his probationary state. Had he kept the covenant, he and his offspring would have been confirmed, like the elect angels, in a state of unchangeable goodness. But being seduced by the devil, and the solicitation of his wife, he tasted the fruit of the prohibited tree, and hence the source of all our woe. By the disobedience of this one man all his posterity are made guilty. Being their federal head, by the divine constitution, the sin he committed in that capacity is imputed to them, and they are as much exposed to the penal sanction of the covenant, as if they had committed the original transgression in their own persons. The death threatened in that primitive constitution was threefold, temporal, spiritual, and eternal. Accordingly, whenever Adam sinned, he lost his spiritual life, the image of God, and a power of living to him in holy obedience. The seeds of mortality were sown in his constitution, which gradually sprung up and strengthened in his frame, till they brought him to his original dust. And from the time of his transgression, he was exposed to eternal death.

The life promised in the covenant was opposed to the death threatened. Had Adam persevered in innocence, he and his posterity would never have been subjected to natural death. Spiritual life they would have enjoyed in all its beauty, energy, and glory, and in due time obtained everlasting happiness.

Some, indeed, censure the equity of this constitution, whereby Adam was made the federal head of his posterity, and think it extremely hard, that all his children should be ruined by an offence which they never committed. But it must be an equitable constitution, because it was framed by that great Being, whose nature is perfectly holy, and all whose works and appointments are in righteousness. Yea, it were easy to show, that the constitution of Adam's federal headship was more favourable to the human race, and gave them a much fairer probability of happiness than if every man had been put upon a personal trial of obedience; for in this covenant Adam had the eternal happiness or misery of many millions of his descendants, as a motive to obedience, which would not have been the case with his posterity, had every man stood trial for himself. He had, too, the motive of

love to his posterity, as the common and original parent of that great family who were to spring from his loins, which they would have wanted themselves. He had also as a motive to obedience superior to his posterity, the manifold sweetnesses and allurements of paradise itself, the richest and most beautiful spot of the new created earth, a place prepared by infinite goodness itself for his entertainment and happiness; together with the additional motive of the tree of life, which grew in the midst of the garden, that on every occasion it might appear to his bodily eyes, as a material and visible representation of that glorious and happy life which was promised in the covenant, if the condition of it had been performed. And if innocent Adam, in such advantageous circumstances, and having such superior motives to obedience, was overcome by the tempter, what probability is there that his posterity would have stood a trial of their own personal virtue, in less advantageous circumstances, and succeeded better than their progenitor had done?

As by virtue of Adam's federal representation his posterity were considered as one person with him in law, what took place with him holds also with them. The guilt of his fatal transgression was not only charged on him, but his soul was corrupted in all its faculties. His understanding was darkened, his will perverted, and his affections misplaced. And the very same is the situation of all his posterity; they have guilt *imputed* and sin *inherent*. Adam's sin is imputed to them, as he was their *federal head*, and corruption of nature is conveyed from him to them, as their *natural root* in the way of ordinary generation.

The covenant of works being once violated, Adam ceased to act any more in the *capacity* of a federal head, and therefore all his future actions, whether of disobedience as a sinner, or of obedience as a believer, could neither procure life nor death to his posterity; because he acted, ever after the fall, *in a single personal capacity*. And even the law itself became weak, and lost its power to give life to Adam, after he became a sinner: "this was what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh," as Paul observes. In which expression of the apostle there is a twofold weakness of the law pointed at; not only an incapacity to give life, on account of the flesh, or corruption of law transgressors; but a weakness in the law itself, or an incapacity to give life unto sinners, in respect of the appointment of God, and the original design of the covenant of works. It was so constituted by its great Framer that it could give life to man *innocent*, but not to man *guilty*. Its language to Adam was, *do and live*, transgress and *die*. The promise of life in that covenant was only made to man persevering in holiness: as soon as he offended, he was cut off from the promise, and subjected to the penalty. And in this sense all his posterity are under the law of works, in their natural condition, and will remain under it for ever, those excepted who are the objects of distinguishing love, and interested in a better covenant.

This better covenant is with peculiar propriety called the covenant of grace; because grace divinely rich and free was the original spring of it, and shines conspicuous in all its parts. As by the first covenant sin reigned to death, so by the new covenant grace reigns through righteousness to eternal life by Jesus Christ. The first covenant was made by God with *Adam*, as the public head of all his natural offspring. The second covenant was made by God with *Christ*, as the public head of all his spiritual seed; and in this respect Adam was the type of him that was to come. The first Adam was bound to perform the *condition* of the covenant of works for all those whom he represented, and the second Adam was bound to perform the *condition* of the covenant of grace for all those whom he represented; with this difference, that Adam was obliged, in point of duty, to engage for his posterity, when God *proposed* the covenant to him, whereas the Son of God was *disposed* to undertake the redemption of his people by the bowels of his own love.

This covenant of peace was between the Father and the Son from eternity, and all the parts of this wondrous plan were adjusted with infinite wisdom, counsel, and discernment. It was an act of grace in the Father to *accept* of his own Son in this covenant, as the surety of sinners, as well as in the Son to become their surety. But though the first and second Adam agree in being federal heads, their *federal representation* was *not of equal extent*. Adam, in the first covenant, represented all his natural descendants. Christ, in the second, represents the elect only, or all those, who, from eternity, were given to him by the Father, to be redeemed from misery, and to obtain salvation with eternal glory. The rest of the human race were passed by in the decree of election; and left to possess that heritage of wrath, to which they are born, as the



descendants of Adam, and under the covenant of works. And no impeachment of the divine rectitude can arise from this, any more than from leaving the apostate angelic tribe to perish irretrievably in their sin. When reasonable creatures sin against God, the perfection of his nature requires that their sin should be punished according to its demerit, and if they never share in divine grace, it is what God is not their debtor to confer, who is free to do with his own as he pleaseth. And those who are the blessed objects included in the decree of election, are indebted for this inestimable privilege to the free and distinguishing grace of God, and not to anything in themselves, or done by them in time. The love of Jehovah was the cause of their election; their faith, love, repentance, and good works, are the fruits of election, and flow as necessarily from the great source of electing love as beams of light issue from the sun. They were chosen in Christ as their new covenant head, that they might be holy, not because they *would* be holy.

It was to accomplish the redemption of this chosen seed that the Son of God was, in the fulness of time, made flesh. He assumed the nature of those whom he was to redeem into union with his divine personality, that, being related to heaven in respect of his divinity, and to earth in respect of his humanity, he might more fitly be the day's-man between God and man, and perform the office of a mediator. The nature, which he assumed into union with himself, was perfectly holy, that it might be qualified for subsisting in union to his divinity, and for that obedience which he was to perform as our surety. He was not included in the federal representation of the first Adam, that he might be free from the imputation of his sin. He was conceived in a virgin's womb, by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, that he might be free from that depravity of nature, which is conveyed from Adam to his posterity by ordinary generation. A part of the virgin's substance was sanctified by the Holy Spirit, freed from all sinful pollution or tendency towards it, and separated or set apart for the holy purpose of forming our Lord's body. The particular manner in which the Holy Ghost accomplished this divine operation is veiled in mysterious secrecy, and where the scriptures do not give us a key we are not at liberty to pick the lock.

But though, by virtue of the act of assumption, our Lord united a real human nature to his divinity, he did not assume *a human person*. To constitute a human person, a true body and a reasonable soul must be united, and these must subsist *distinctly* by themselves. But it was otherwise with our blessed Lord; for, though he had a real human nature, a true body and reasonable soul united together, yet these never had a *separate subsistence of their own*; but from the very moment of his supernatural conception, by the overshadowing Spirit, they subsisted in *union* to his divine personality as the Son of God. He has therefore a human nature, but one divine person for ever.

When the two natures were united in his person they were not blended with one another; though closely united, they remained distinct. By the personal or hypostatical union, as divines call it, our Lord's divine nature was not *converted* into his human nature, neither was his human nature *converted* into his divine nature, but each nature remained distinct, though united to the other, and retained its own peculiar and essential properties.

The human nature which our Lord assumed, was richly supplied with the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, to support and strengthen him in the course of his painful obedience and sufferings as the surety of his people. As their surety it became him to fulfil all righteousness. A twofold debt they owed, a debt of obedience, and a debt of punishment, neither of which they were able to pay. Both these debts were paid by him for them. His righteousness, which was the performance of the *condition* of the new covenant, consisted of three parts, the holiness of his nature, the purity of his life, and his sufferings from the sordid manger to the bloody cross. The law of God required the most perfect rectitude of soul, as well as perfect holiness of life, and the first in order to the last. Our Redeemer answered both these requisitions in the most perfect manner; for he was the holy thing born of a virgin, and in his life he was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separated from sinners. The first Adam was quickly overcome by the tempter and seduced into sin; but the second Adam was proof against all his temptations, and held fast his integrity till death put a period to a life of the fairest innocence, and of the most extensive usefulness, and advantage to mankind. By the spotless purity of his nature and life he paid that debt of obedience which his people owed, and by his sufferings, commencing at his birth and terminating in his death, he paid their debt of punishment. His sufferings for his people



were *voluntary*; for he became obedient to death, even the death of the cross; and that they were not *eternal* was owing to the infinite dignity of the sufferer. The punishment due to the sins of his people he endured, in consequence of the *imputation* of them to him. As under the ceremonial dispensation there was a *typical translation* of the guilt of the *literal Israel* to the victim, in consequence of which it was slain: so there was a *real translation* of the guilt of the *spiritual Israel* unto the Lamb of God, in consequence of which his blood was shed.

As our Lord was invested with three Mediatorial offices by his Father, that of a Prophet, Priest, and King, it was in the character of the Great High Priest over the house of God, that he died to make atonement for the sins of his people. His priestly office consisted of two parts,—to offer himself a sacrifice, and to make intercession. The first part of this office he performed on earth, in his unparalleled sufferings, which terminated in his death, when he offered to God his entire human nature, soul and body. His sacrifice was a perfect atonement for the offences of his people, committed against a Being infinite in all perfection, by virtue of the union of his humanity, which was the oblation to his divinity, the altar that sanctified the gift; for it was by the Eternal Spirit that he offered himself to God. And that his sacrifice was acceptable to the Father, appears from his appointing him to lay down his life, his declaration that he was well-pleased for his righteousness' sake, his resurrection from the gloomy grave, giving him glory and a kingdom, the promise of a numerous seed, and the descent of the Holy Spirit, after he ascended on high. If the sacrifice which he offered be considered in the extent of its intrinsic virtue and merit, it is sufficient to save all men, or ten thousand worlds; for merit that is infinite will extend to all possible redemption. But Christ never intended to save to the utmost extent of the merit of his death; he only intended by his death to save the election, or those whom the Father had given unto him. He died to purchase a *certainty* of salvation for this chosen seed, and not to procure a *possibility* of salvation for all, or to bring all men into a salvable condition.

His intercession, which is the other branch of his priestly office, he is now performing within the veil. Having offered his sacrifice on earth, like the legal high priest, he went into the most holy place, where he appears in the Father's presence an Advocate and Intercessor. His intercession is of the same extent with his death. For the elect only he died, and for them only he intercedes. He intercedes for those elected persons already brought into the covenant of grace, that they may be kept in it; and for those elect persons who are still in their natural condition, that they may be made believers, and brought home to their Father's house.

His sacrifice, inclusive of his active obedience, is the foundation of his intercession, or the ground upon which he pleads. And as he procured all blessings for his people by his death, so he intercedes, that all those may be conferred upon them; according to their necessities, and in the order in which the blessings of the covenant are to be communicated. As the great Intercessor of the church, he pleads not that the blessings of the covenant may be conferred upon the footing of *mercy*, but upon the footing of *justice*, as due to his merit, and the dear purchase of his blood. His intercession is always, and in all things, prevalent with the Father, and him the Father heareth always, because he loves him with a supreme affection; because he pleads for no persons but those for whom he died, and for no blessings but those which he purchased. And his intercession will continue for ever in heaven, for he hath an unchangeable priesthood, and ever liveth to make intercession. As he intercedes for the church on earth that it may be glorified; so he will intercede for ever in heaven that it may be preserved in glory, and the rich possession of eternal blessedness. And the eternal happiness of the spotless company about the throne will come into their possession, as the fruit of his meritorious death and prevalent intercession; for the Lamb in the midst of the throne will feed them, and lead them to living fountains of waters.

He is also invested, as Mediator, with the office of a prophet. As he is the great Prophet of the church, he hath given unto it that whole revelation of the divine will, contained in the holy scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, in which the whole duties of the law of nature are clear as a sunbeam, exemplified by his own amiable and heavenly deportment, and the footsteps of many of the flock, who through faith and patience are now inheriting the promises. The same celestial oracles contain a great variety of the most important doctrines, absolutely necessary to be known in order to the salvation of sinners, but which would have remained for ever unknown, had they not been revealed by this Interpreter of a

thousand, this great Prophet, this bright Morning Star, who hath opened the hidden treasures of heaven, and unveiled the gracious purposes of God unto miserable sinners of our race.

But though the revelation of divine truth in the word of God is perfect in itself, yet in the bare letter of it, it is by no means sufficient for the salvation of sinners, otherwise all would be saved, who enjoy the external objective revelation of the gospel. There is indeed light enough in the word, objectively considered, but the sinner, by reason of spiritual blindness, is incapable of beholding the objects and truths of divine revelation, in their own nature, spiritual importance, excellence, and glory, till his understanding is spiritually illumined by Christ, the light of the world, who removes the face-covering of spiritual blindness, and unveils the glories of spiritual objects to the mind, and which, being once seen, in their true light, never fail to have a saving and operative influence on the heart. The order and progress of this spiritual illumination corresponds to the natural course of things. The natural day succeeds the night, which involves the material system in darkness: and the day of saving illumination succeeds the deplorable night of spiritual darkness, which hath fallen upon the souls of men, and involved the spiritual world in impenetrable obscurity, till the Sun of righteousness rise upon the soul with spiritual light and healing in his wings. As the light of the morning shineth more and more unto the perfect day: so the light, which is conveyed from Jesus, the Morning Star, into the soul, gradually enlightens it, till it arrive at the perfection of knowledge in the immediate vision of God's face.

And Jesus will execute his prophetic office in the heavenly state itself, in all that diversity of glorious objects, which he will present unto the heavenly illumined mind, in all its improvements in knowledge; for the Lamb will be the light of the heavenly temple, and shine forth upon the nations of them that are saved, in the perfection of light and beauty, majesty and glory. "Their sun will no more go down, nor their moon withdraw itself, but the Lord will be their everlasting light, and their God their glory."

Our blessed Emmanuel is also invested with the office of a King. As the second person of the adorable Trinity, he is God over all blessed for ever, equally the Creator and Governor of the universe with the Father and Spirit. But in the economy of grace, as the Redeemer of the church, he is invested with a delegated power and authority by the Father, for carrying into execution his mediatorial administration, till he present all his redeemed spotless and faultless before the throne of God. The universal kingdom of providence is committed to him, he is the Governor among the nations, and his kingdom commands every thing that has being. But besides the universal kingdom, subjected to him as Mediator, he is, by the Father's designation and supreme authority, constituted Head of the church, and Lawgiver in Zion. In consequence of being made King in Zion, he alone has the right of *legislation*, in this his own spiritual and independent kingdom. This he claims as his prerogative, and a right inherent in his crown, and his glory in this respect will he not give to another.

There have been two particular church states, which have been established by him, with every thing *pertaining* to them, viz. that of the law and gospel church. He was graciously pleased to take the people of Israel, the seed of Jacob his servant and Abraham his friend, into a covenant of peculiarity with himself, and to distinguish them from the rest of mankind, by a peculiar system of government and laws of his appointment. That system of laws, which he gave this favourite but sinful people, consisted of three parts—moral, judicial, and ceremonial. He gave them the moral law, as the eternal rule of righteousness, to which they were to study conformity in heart, speech, and behaviour. This law results from the infinite rectitude of the divine nature, and is therefore of indispensable and eternal obligation, binding upon all persons, in all places, at all times, and in all conditions. This law all natural men are under as a covenant of works violated by Adam, and believers are only under it as a rule of holy obedience, in the hand of the Mediator, as in the sequel of this treatise will more fully appear.

He gave also to his ancient people a system of judicial statutes for the regulation of their civil government, in that peculiar commonwealth. This law is not *obligatory upon Christian states*, any farther than some of its precepts are of a moral nature.

The Israelites received the ceremonial law for their direction in the worship of God, and as typical of better things to come.

The office of high priest commenced in the person of Aaron, and was to be continued in his family; and Levi's tribe were appropriated to the altar, and appointed

to conduct the public services of the sanctuary. Every part of the worship both of the tabernacle and temple, together with the laws of *admission to and exclusion from external fellowship with the church of Israel*, was very particularly adjusted under that dispensation.

The whole ceremonial system was a typical institution and positive ordinance, founded in the *will* and appointment of God, and not in his *nature*, and therefore it was alterable, and abolished at the death of Christ, and was never intended to be obligatory under the Christian dispensation.

The gospel church and kingdom, which succeeded the Jewish establishment, is also framed and set up by Jesus Christ. He hath appointed the office-bearers in the gospel church; how they are to come into their office; their qualifications for it, and the manner in which they are to discharge it. Of these some were extraordinary, necessary for opening the Christian dispensation, and establishing the religion of Jesus in the world; but were not to continue; such were the apostles, prophets, and evangelists. Some were ordinary office-bearers, and their office to be continued in the church to the end of the world: such are pastors and teachers, together with helps and governments, or presbyters, who are to aid the pastors of the church in ruling, though not in preaching the word. To those we add deacons, whose business it is to serve tables, and manage the secular affairs of the church. The Great Lawgiver hath also appointed the two seals of the covenant under the gospel, baptism, and the sacred supper; the form of government to be observed in the New Testament church, and the *terms of admission to her fellowship, and exclusion from it*. These, and every other thing pertaining to this spiritual community, he hath adjusted by his *own express authority*, and not left them to be new-modelled, or changed according to the arbitrary humours of men.

The power and authority of the office-bearers of the church is in subordination to the authority of the Great Head, and consists in carrying into execution the laws and ordinances which he hath appointed till he come again: but they have no power to add to his doctrines, ordinances, and laws, to take from them, or to alter them. Whatever they have received from the Head, they are to hold fast till he come, and to teach and observe with fidelity and care whatsoever he hath commanded them: and as far as they do otherwise in their doctrine, or judicative capacity, they are not the servants of Christ, nor subject to his authority, as the only Lawgiver in Zion.

It is also the peculiar prerogative of this glorious King of the church to form the heart to the obedience of his own laws, he engraves his law upon the hearts of his subjects. Other kings may prescribe laws to their subjects, and command the obedience of the outward man, while their power cannot reach the heart; but the Prince of life reigns in the hearts of his subjects, and makes them a willing people in the day of his power. And when by the gospel, the rod of his strength, all the election are made the willing subjects of his government, and all those added to the church that are to be saved, and the whole mystical body completed, he will give a most glorious display of his kingly power in the great day of final doom and decision, in the righteous judgment of the world; "for the Father hath committed all judgment to the Son," and will at last judge the world in righteousness by him.

Having now spoken of Christ's mediatorial offices, it may not be improper to enumerate a few of the blessings of his purchase, which the whole spiritual Israel are made to possess in due time.

The glorious gospel is the great and chief mean which God the Spirit makes use of in bringing the elect into a state of salvation by Jesus Christ. No qualifications are required of sinners to *entitle* them to the gospel salvation, or to be the foundation of their right to believe in the Son of God. The calls, commands, and invitations of the word, are the ground of faith, and they are directed to mankind, as lost and perishing sinners of Adam's family. As every Israelite had a right to eat of the paschal lamb; to gather the manna in the wilderness; and if bit by the fiery serpents, to look to the brazen serpent for healing: so every sinner, whatever he has been, and whatever he has done, has a right to believe in Christ as the great ordinance of heaven for his salvation, and ought to consider the calls and invitations of the gospel so *particularly* directed to himself, as though they were not directed to any other person in the creation. It is the distinguished excellence and glory of the gospel, that it offers Jesus and his salvation, *fully and freely* to every sinner, who hears this joyful sound.

But though no qualifications are required as the foundation of faith, but only the gracious declarations of the word, yet a sense and conviction of sin and misery is



necessary in all those who believe. It is not necessary, as the ground of faith, but it is necessary to faith itself. For it must be observed, that a right to believe, and faith itself, are very different things. The one lies wholly in the *word*, the other is seated in the *heart*. Many have a right to believe in the external invitation, but few in comparison improve this right into real faith. And even many convinced sinners perish without believing in Christ, as many of the Israelites who passed by the burning mount, died in the wilderness, and never entered the promised land. And of those whose convictions are of a saving nature, some have stronger convictions, some weaker, some are under them a longer, some a shorter time. Sometimes convinced sinners are long in the place of the breaking forth of children; at other times, as soon as Zion is in travail, she brings forth her sons, and a nation is born in one day: so diversified is the way of the Spirit in this mysterious and divine process.

But sooner or later, when convictions are saving, they issue in regeneration, which consists in an effectual supernatural change of the faculties of the soul. This gracious change is produced by the agency of the Spirit of Christ, and sinners are wholly passive, when it is effected. They may indeed be active in the use of appointed means, that they may obtain conversion, but the infusion of the heavenly nature in regeneration is wholly the work of the Spirit. They can no more produce the heavenly life in their souls, by any actions of their own, or improvement of their natural powers, than they could be the authors of their own creation, or than a man under the power of natural death, the prey of worms and corruption, can raise himself from the darksome grave, and perform the functions of natural life. When this change is effected, the soul does not receive any *new* natural faculties; for its faculties are essential to its nature, and though weakened, were not lost by sin. The soul is possessed of the same understanding, will, and affections, in every state of its being, as constituent parts of its nature. But in regeneration the old, natural, and essential faculties of the soul are renewed by the infusion and reception of new spiritual qualities. This change is also *universal* in the soul, and pervades all its faculties, and yet the whole soul is not renewed. In regeneration grace is perfect in its *parts*, but is not perfect in its *growth*. As when a child is born into the natural world, he has all the members of a man, though these are but small at first, in comparison of what they will be in a state of manhood: so when the new creature is formed in the soul, it contains every grace really, in the seed and principle, though no grace is perfect in its degree.

Justification is another privilege of believers. Though *distinct* in its nature from regeneration, it is *inseparably* connected with it. Justification is a change of the sinner's *state*, regeneration is a change of his *heart*. The one is an act of God without him, the other is the *work* of God within him. The one respects the *penalty* of the law, and the *punishment* which it threatens, the other respects the *precepts* of the law, and the *obedience* which it requires. In the one the believer is delivered from the *guilt* of sin, in the other from its *power*. In the one he has a *title* to heaven, and in the other a begun *meekness* for it.

The foundation of justification is the meritorious righteousness of the Divine Surety, exclusive of all qualifications in the person justified, or any works performed by him. The faith by which he is justified is of the operation of God, and it neither justifies by virtue of its *habit*, or existence in the soul as a grace of the Spirit, nor yet by its own act, as it is exercised by the soul; but it justifies as an instrument or hand of the soul, which it stretches forth to receive the gift of Christ's righteousness, exhibited as the object of justifying faith in the word of grace, and claims an interest in it as its own. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to the sinner by God, at the time when it is received by faith. And when it is imputed to him, it is not infused into his nature, but in law reckoning, it is so placed to his account that it is as pleadable by him for acceptance with God and eternal life, as if it had been wrought out by him in his own person.

In justification the believer not only obtains a title to life, which he cannot lose again, but also a full, free, and irreversible pardon of all his sins. When he is justified, he is completely freed from the law, as a covenant of works, both in its *precept* and *penalty*. He is freed from the precept of the law, as a covenant, because in the covenant of works the law's precept was prescribed to Adam as the foundation of a title to life, but it is not prescribed to the believer for this end in the gospel. But though the believer is freed from the precept of the law, in its federal form, as obedience to it is the foundation of a title to life, according to the nature and constitution of the covenant of works, yet he is not freed from its obligation, as it is the eternal rule of righteousness, resulting immediately from the all-



perfect nature of the divine Lawgiver: for in this sense the law must have been the rule of obedience to man, though it had never been delivered to him in the form of a covenant; and in this sense the law is unalterable in its obligation, till the nature of the Lawgiver be changed, and man cease to be a subject of moral government. This natural law is taken into the gospel system, and is in the hand of Christ as Mediator, and it is obligatory on all his mystical members, not as in the old covenant that they may obtain a *title* to life by obeying it, but as the *rule* of their obedience: which obedience is at once the *evidence* of their title to life by faith in the Saviour's righteousness, and their *meetness* for the possession of eternal life, in respect of the frame and temper of their mind; for without holiness, in this sense, no man can see the Lord.

In justification the believer is also freed from the law's penalty, or which is the same thing, he obtains the remission of sin, and is exempted for ever from the punishment and vindictive wrath it deserves. There hath been a controversy keenly agitated among divines, about the pardon of sin obtained in justification. Some maintain that, in justification, all sins are pardoned, past, present, and to come. Others assert that, in justification, only past and present sins are pardoned, and a foundation is laid for the remission of future sins, upon renewed repentance and application to the blood of atonement. This controversy, like many others, has been very fruitless, and consists rather in words than things. The doctrine of scripture concerning the pardon of sin seems to be as follows. In justification a complete and irrevocable pardon, of all sin already committed, is obtained. And the justified believer being now happily delivered out of his old covenant state, and interested in the new covenant and its glorious Head, such is the nature and contexture of the new covenant, within the bond of which he is brought, that no sins, which he afterwards commits, ever expose him to condemnation; for there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus; there is none in time, there will be none at death, none at the great day of final *retribution*, none to all *eternity*. Not that believer's sins less deserve punishment, in their own nature, than his sins while an unbeliever; on the contrary, they have more intrinsic demerit in them than the sins of his former state, as they are committed against greater degrees of light, love, and mercy manifested to him, and greater internal ability to resist temptation. But the nature of the constitution, under which he now is, *preserves* him for ever free from the law of works, so that he can never be subjected either to the commanding or condemning power of that covenant. But though the believer cannot sin against the law of works, and therefore cannot be condemned by that law to eternal punishment, yet times innumerable, in thought, word, and deed, he sins against the law, as the *rule* of his obedience. And though the sins which he commits in his new state, against the law in the hand of the Mediator, do not expose him to vindictive punishment, yet they expose him to the chastisements and corrections of God as a Father, who loves his children in his heart, though he may have the rod in his hand. And however the wicked may sometimes pass with impunity in the present life, as their time of punishment is approaching, yet if God's dear children offend, they will certainly meet with correction and the discipline of the cross; for though in mercy he will save their souls, he will take vengeance on their inventions. And it is the duty of his children to pray for the pardon of their sins, daily committed against the divine law, as the *rule* of their obedience; and also that they may obtain the sense of the primary pardon of sin in the day of believing.

As believers are justified by the righteousness and regenerated by the Spirit of Christ, so by him they obtain the inestimable privilege of adoption into the divine family.

There is a twofold adoption mentioned in scripture; there is a general adoption into a visible church state, when men are brought externally into covenant with God, as were first the Jews, and afterwards the Gentiles. But many, who are the sons of God in this respect, are his enemies, and will at last be found among the workers of iniquity.

But the privilege of adoption, of which I now speak, is peculiar to believers; adoption in the proper notion of it consists in taking a person into a family, and making him an heir, though he is not so by his birth. It is so with the adopted sons of God. Though by nature the children of the devil and heirs of hell, by adoption they become the children of God and the heirs of glory. Men usually adopt into their families those who possess some amiable qualities in their estimation, or because they have no children of their own; but those, who by adoption are admitted into the heavenly family, are destitute of every amiable and desirable

qualification. Nor does the great Father of all stand in need of adopting any such into his family for want of children; for besides his own Son, in whom he is infinitely well pleased, he has millions of holy angels, his sons by creation, who never offended him.

By being the adopted sons of God, believers have a title to all the privileges of his children. They possess the Spirit of adoption, as inseparably connected with their sonship, whereby they call God their Father, and worship and serve him with the affections and dispositions of sons.

They are entitled to protection, provision, correction, to grace and glory; all things are theirs, because they are Christ's, and by him the adopted sons of God.

And as they are renewed, justified, and adopted, so they are sanctified, and are in scripture called "the sanctified in Christ Jesus." The foundation of their sanctification is laid in their regeneration by the Spirit. Justification is an *act* of God, because it is *perfect* in the first moment of believing; sanctification is a *work* of God, because it is only *gradually* brought to perfection. In the new birth the new nature exists in all the faculties of the soul, but it is not perfected in any of them. There is light in the understanding, love in the will, and order in the affections; but darkness, enmity, and disorder still remain, in some degree, in all those powers of the mind, till the body of clay be dissolved. Sanctification is the same work begun in conversion, carried on to perfection, till the holy nature has perfectly diffused itself through all the powers of the soul, and the remainders of the body of death are entirely extinguished. The continued assistance of the Spirit is as necessary to carry on this work as to begin it, and the believer is as dependent on God for renewed ability to exercise the grace he has received, as for the implantation of grace at first, or for the support and exercise of his natural faculties and members. Though sanctification is not the ground of the believer's title to heaven, but Immanuel's righteousness, yet it answers many excellent and invaluable purposes. It illustrates the glorious energy and power of divine grace. God is glorified, when his children bring forth much fruit. The Redeemer is satisfied when he sees this fruit of the travail of his soul upon the hearts of men. The Spirit is glorified and pleased with the success of his applying work, in reducing the rebellious to the obedience of faith. It is profitable to the world, as a visible representation of the amiableness and beauty of real religion, and a practical testimony and remonstrance against sin. It is profitable to the Christian himself, as it is a source of much inward pleasure, satisfaction, and joy; as it is the best evidence of his justification, and as it qualifies him in respect of the frame and temper of his mind, for the immediate vision of God's face. For there must always be a correspondence and agreement between the faculties and powers of enjoyment, and the objects to be enjoyed, before they can afford real satisfaction and delight. Though the polluted and impure were not excluded from heaven, by the express declaration and appointment of God, the depravity of their own hearts would entirely disqualify them for the exercises and enjoyments of the celestial state. A sow would not be more out of its proper element in a royal palace, or a fish on the dry land, than a polluted sinner in this blissful habitation wherein dwelleth righteousness. But by the sanctification of the Spirit, the Christian is brought into a proper frame and aptitude for the objects, employments, and satisfactions of the better country. And his *perseverance* in a state of grace and holiness, till he come thither, is secured by the divine decree, the constitution of the new covenant, the merits of Christ, the work of the Spirit, and the power, faithfulness, and love of God.

Death also is the Christian's. Though he is not exempted from its *stroke*, he is delivered from its *sting*. Death, which puts a final period to the carnal, tumultuous, and insipid joys of the wicked, and dismisses their souls to the place of weeping and gnashing of teeth, is to the sincere disciple of Jesus a period to all the labours and distresses of this mortal life, and a blessed introduction to that fulness of joy which is at God's right hand. Like the fiery chariot, in which the holy *Tishbite* ascended, death transports the gracious soul to the excellent glory. It is true, that when the soul of the believer is separated from its kindred clay, his body must descend into the grave and see corruption, but there it sleeps, as in a peaceful habitation and quiet resting-place, free from all the troubles, storms, and tumults of life. And, though it mingle with its original dust and see corruption, still it is precious in the Redeemer's sight, and a part of his mystical body. And, being so nearly related to him, and a part of himself, though it be forgotten in the land of the living, it will not be forgotten by him, nor cease to be the object of his tender care. When the great rising day is come, he will reanimate the dead bodies

of his saints with their former souls, and raise them from the dust of the earth, much fairer, more improved, and glorious forms than those wasted, disfigured, and corruptible frames, which death lodged in the gloomy repositories of the grave. At this wished for period, death and the grave will be swallowed up in victory with respect to the whole mystical body of Christ. The resurrection bodies of the just will be composed of the same material substance with their present bodies, but strangely improved by the addition of new spiritual qualities, that they may be capable to bear the visions of glory, and to be meet companions to their souls in the joys and exercises of a blessed eternity. The bodies of the righteous will be raised up from the grave in *union* to their mystical Head, by his Spirit, who dwelleth in them; but those of the wicked will be quickened by the power of Christ as a *judge*. The saints will ascend in their whole persons to meet the Lord in the air, and when they are brought before his venerable tribunal, the glorious Judge will, with infinite delight and satisfaction, and to their unspeakable joy, pronounce the irreversible sentence, adjudging them to eternal life. They will also acquiesce in that doleful sentence, which the righteous Judge will pronounce against apostate angels and reprobate men, appointing them to endless misery, in proportion to the demerit of their crimes.

And after the solemn process of that day is ended, the glorious Judge of all will return to his Father's kingdom, at the head of myriads of attending angels, and the whole church of the redeemed, and introduce them with gladness great, and mirth on every side, into his Father's presence, where their knowledge and holiness, happiness and glory, shall be perfect, and continue through the unmeasurable extent of unceasing duration.

Thus I have laid together in a connected series a number of the capital truths of divine revelation, without attempting to prove them from the sacred oracles, that they might be brought within a more narrow compass. Those who are acquainted with the holy scriptures, and the harmony and analogy of divine truth, will be able to judge whether the sentiments contained in this small treatise have a foundation in the word of inspiration, and are agreeable to the doctrine contained in our Confession of Faith and Catechisms. The truths—selected from scripture in this short running narration—are the truths inculcated by the Relief ministers upon the people of their pastoral charge, the saving influence and energy whereof they desire they and their hearers may experience upon their hearts, and then they doubt not but they will be saved themselves, and they who hear them.

And now let the candid world judge whether those professed witnesses for truth are not as *forward as wise*, who injuriously charge the Relief ministers with *de-luding* the generation, and *relieving* them from the yoke of Christ. If to preach the above-mentioned system of divine truths is to relieve the generation from the Redeemer's yoke, what sort of truths do these men themselves preach to bring them under it?

## VII.

### THE REV. MR. BAINE'S LETTER OF RESIGNATION.

*Paisley, February 10, 1766.*

REVEREND DEAR SIR,—It would have given me great pleasure to have met with my brethren of the presbytery of Paisley, as it would have given me an opportunity of acquainting them with what I now inform you of as their moderator, to be laid before them, namely, that I entirely give up my charge of the high church in this town, and the care of the flock belonging to it, into the hands of the presbytery. They do not know how far I am advanced in life, who see not that an house for worship so very large as the high church, and commonly so crowded, must be very unequal to my strength. And this burden was made more heavy, by denying me a session to assist me in the common concerns of the parish, which I certainly had a title to. Nor am I singular in thinking so, as I have the opinion of the first judge of the kingdom, that, to say no more, it was peevish to refuse it. But the load became quite intolerable, when, by a late unhappy process, the just and natural right of it was wrested from us, which drove away twelve men of excellent character from sitting in session; so that I have not one elder to five hundred examinable persons in my proportion. Nor does it alleviate the burden, that the session's right was so tamely given up (some perhaps will say, betrayed) by



others, who ought to have defended it; for in any society, where candour is thought to be gone, confidence must die. I would earnestly beg of my brethren to think, that this change of my condition, and charge I have accepted, makes no change in my creed or Christian belief; none in my principles of Christian and ministerial communion; nay, none in my cordial regard to the constitution and interests of the Church of Scotland, which I solemnly engaged to support some more than thirty years ago, and hope to do so while I live. At the same time I abhor persecution in every form, and that abuse of church power of late, which to me appears inconsistent with humanity, with the civil interests of the nation, and destructive of the ends of our office as ministers of Christ. I would only add, and assure my brethren, that I go away with a grateful sense of their civilities to me while among them; as a small recompense, it is my heart's desire to God, that they and their flocks may prosper; and that they may be directed to promote a speedy and comfortable settlement of a pastor over that very numerous and affectionate people, who are now my charge no more. With esteem I am, Reverend dear Sir, yours, &c.

JAMES BAINE.

Directed, *To the Reverend Mr. Alexander Crookshanks,* }  
*minister of the gospel in Mearns.* }

## VIII.

DISSENTING CHURCHES IN SCOTLAND IN 1773, WITH THE NAMES  
 OF THEIR MINISTERS.

## BURGHER ASSOCIATE SYNOD.

## PRESBYTERY OF GLASGOW.

<i>Congregations.</i>	<i>Names of Ministers.</i>	<i>Congregations.</i>	<i>Names of Ministers.</i>
Glasgow	{ James Fisher	Pollokshaws	David Walker
Falkirk	{ George Henderson	Paisley	Samuel Kinloch
Cumbarnauld	John Belfrage	Kilbarchan	John Lindsay
Kirkintilloch	James Moir	Greenock	William Richardson
Stirling	John Thomson	Cambusnethan	Vacant
Dunblane	Robert Campbell	Kirk of Shorts	Vacant
Down, or Bridge-of-Teath	Michael Gilfillan	Kilmarnock	Vacant
	William Fletcher	Cumnock	Vacant

## PRESBYTERY OF PERTH AND DUNFERMLINE.

Dunfermline	John Smith	Dundee	William Ballantyne
Perth	John Jervie	Aberdeen	Alexander Dick
Kirkcaldy	Robert Shirra	Glenurck	Alexander Hunter
Scoon	James Wylie	Kilmeny	George Thomson
Kennoway	William Arnot	Dunning	John M'Kie
Auchtermuchty	John Frazer	Kinross	Vacant
Orwell	Thomas Porteous	St. Andrews	Vacant
Lochgelly	David Greig	Brechin	Vacant
Alloa	Thomas Waters		

## PRESBYTERY OF EDINBURGH.

Linton	James Mair	Coldstream	John Riddoch
Dalkeith	William Hutton	Dunse	Andrew Davidson
Haddington	John Brown	Berwick	Alexander Dickson
Edinburgh	John Patison	Whitburn	Vacant
Stow	William Kidston	Bathgate	Vacant
Stitchill	George Coventry	Torplichen	Vacant
Jedburgh	Alexander Shanks	Linlithgow	Vacant
Kelso	Robert Nichol	Tranent	Vacant
Liddesdale	James Fletcher	North Berwick	Vacant
Selkirk	George Lawson	Hawick	Vacant
Ecclesfechan	John Johnston	New-Town	Vacant
Biggar	John Low	Ettrick	Vacant
Dunbar	John Henderson	Moffat	Vacant
Musselburgh	James Scot		

In connection with this synod there are three presbyteries in Ireland, our settlements in England, and four in America with several vacancies.



## ANTIBURGHER ASSOCIATE SYNOD.

## PRESBYTERY OF PERTH.

<i>Congregations.</i>	<i>Names of Ministers.</i>	<i>Congregations.</i>	<i>Names of Ministers.</i>
Kinkell	John Muckarsie	Breechin	John Gray
Kinclaven	Alexander Blyth	Benholm	David Harper
Montrose	Colin Mackie	Dundee	William Barlas
Methven	John Wilson	Dumbarrow	John Young
Logicalmond	Alexander Preston	Muirton	James Imrie
Path of Struichil	Laurence Reid	John's Haven	David Harper
Errol	Robert Watson	Perth	Vacant
Ratray	James Henderson	Cupar of Angus	Vacant
Abernethy	Colin Brown	Kirriemuir	Vacant

## GLASGOW PRESBYTERY.

Kilmaurs	David Smyton	Auchinleck	Robert Smith
Mearns	Andrew Thomson	Beith	Andrew Mitchell
Glasgow	{ John Jamieson	Strathaven	David Somerville
Hamilton	{ James Ramsay	Ayr	John Clarkson
Paisley	William Oliver	Newmills	James Gray
Greenock	James Ellice	Colmonell	Vacant
Kilwinning	John Buist	Isle of Bute	Vacant
	William Jamieson		

## STIRLING PRESBYTERY.

Muckart	William Mair	Falkirk	Josiah Hunter
Denny	John Walker	Cumbernauld	Walter Leithead
Alloa	William Moncrief	Grieff }	
Balfour	James Mitchell	Comrie }	James Barlass
Stirling	John Heugh	Buchlivi	John France
Dunblane }	Thomas Russell	Kilmaronock	Vacant
Green-Loaning }			

## EDINBURGH PRESBYTERY.

Edinburgh	Adam Gib	Haddington	Laurence Witherspoon
Howgate	Andrew Bunyan	Borrowstounness	Thomas Cleland
Dalkeith	John Robertson	Whitburn	Archibald Bruce
Elsrighill	John Anderson	Leith	John Proudfoot
East Barns	Robert Cunningham	Lauder	Vacant
Craig-Mailen	Alexander Oliver	Coldingham	Vacant
Mid-Calder	William McGeorge		

## SANQUHAR PRESBYTERY.

Orr	John Mulligan	Dumfries	William Inglis
Sanquhar	John Goodlet	Stranraer	William Drysdale
Wigton	Andrew Ogilvie	Carsphairn	Vacant
Lockerby	George Murray		

## KIRKCALDY PRESBYTERY.

Cairney-Hill	James Burt	Ceres	Thomas Bennet
Burntisland	Richard Jerment	Orwell	James Russell
Lesly	Simon Dempster	St. Monance	Vacant
Patilhead of Kirkcaldy	Thomas Thomson	Leven	Vacant

## ELGIN PRESBYTERY.

Craigdam	William Brown	Clola	William Mitchell
Bogholie }	Henry Clark	Wick }	Thomas Darg
Nairn }		Thurso }	
Nigg	Patrick Buchanan	Aberdeen	Vacant
Elgin	Thomas Duncan	Inverness	Vacant
Huntly }		Forres	Vacant
Grange }	George Cowie	Nairn	Vacant
Cabroch }			

## EARLSTON PRESBYTERY.

Dunse	{ John White	Peebles	Michael Arthur
Earlston	{ John White, junior	Jedburgh	John Robertson
Midholm	John Dalziel	Hawick	John Young
Northam	Andrew Arnot	Kelso	John Muirhead
	James Morrison	Gatesham	Vacant

N. B.—It is supposed that there are seven or eight vacancies in this Synod, which are not marked above.

In connection with this Synod there are four congregations in England, most of whom are Scotch.

In Ireland they have two Presbyteries, consisting of eight settled congregations each, and several vacancies.

In America they have ten Missionaries, at Pennsylvania and New York.

They have thirteen probationers, and seven young men on trials, 2d September, 1773.

## RELIEF SYNOD,

*With the Dates of the Erection of the different Churches.*

## EDINBURGH PRESBYTERY.

<i>Congregations.</i>	<i>Names of Ministers.</i>	<i>Congregations.</i>	<i>Names of Ministers.</i>
Edinburgh	James Baine—1765	Largo	Robert Paterson—1771
Dunse	Alex. Simson—1762	Kilsyth	John Graham—1770
Jedburgh	Thomas Bell—1757	Kilmarnock	Vacant—1772
Falkirk	Michael Boston—1770	Bothwell	Vacant—1762
Dalkeith	Alex. Hutcheson—1768	Dysart	Vacant—1772
Cupar-Fife	Laurence Bonar—1770	St. Ninians	Vacant—1772

## GLASGOW PRESBYTERY.

Glasgow	William Cruden—1765	Auchtermnuchty	Thomas Scott—1762
Dunfermline	Thomas Gillespie—1752	Colinsburgh	James Cowan—1760
Anderston	Joseph Neil—1769	Irvine	Vacant—1771
Campbelton	Robert Pinkerton—1766	Blair-Logie *	— —1761

## OLD PRESBYTERIAN DISSENTERS.

Sandhills near Glasgow	John McMillan	Edinburgh	James Hall
Quarrelwood near Dumfries	John Courtas	Kirkcaldy	James Kircaldie
Pentland	John Thorburn	Denholm	John Arnot
Douglas	John Fairley	Glasgow	Vacant
		Orwell	Vacant

## BEREAN CHURCH.

Fettercairn	— M'Rae	Edinburgh	John Barclay
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*Not Connected with any Party.*

Inverkeithing		Kinglassie	
Glasgow	Peter Reikie		

## IX.

## LIST OF PAMPHLETS ON THE RELIEF TERMS OF COMMUNION, AS FIXED BY SYNOD 1773-4.

THIS was one of the keenest and most important controversies which has raged among the Dissenters in Scotland; Burghers, Antiburghers, Cameronians, and Relief writers engaged in it. The publications were nearly in the following order.

1. Terms of Communion agreed upon by the Scots Methodists, but generally known by the specious denomination of the Presbytery of Relief. In a Letter from a Presbyterian to his Friend in Aberdeen. 1775 or 6. (The Author, the Rev. Mr. Bennett, minister of the Antiburgher Church, Cupar-Fife. Have seen the Third Edition, printed 1779.)

2. A Just View of the Principles of the Presbytery of Relief. Being an Answer to a Pamphlet entitled "Terms of Communion," &c. By a Lover of the Truth in Fife. 1777. (Author understood to be the Rev. Mr. Campbell, Relief minister, Dysart.)

\* At the time, 1773, out of communion with the Relief, but returned again.

3. The Relief Scheme Considered. 1778. (Author Rev. Mr. Ramsay, Anti-burgher minister, Glasgow.)

4. A Compendious View of the Religious System maintained by the Synod of Relief, together with a distinct Account of the Points in difference between the Synod of Relief and the National Establishment on the one hand, and the Secession on the other. By Patrick Hutchison, A.M., minister of the gospel in St. Ninians. 1779.

5. A Review of a late publication entitled "A Compendious View of the Religious System maintained by the Synod of Relief," &c. By James Ramsay, minister of the gospel in Glasgow. 1779.

6. The Re-exhibition of the Burgher Testimony, &c. 1779.

7. A few Animadversions on the Re-exhibition of the Burgher Testimony, as far as it relates to the Principles of the Relief Church. By Patrick Hutchison, St. Ninians. 1779.

8. A Dissertation on the Nature and Genius of the Kingdom of Christ. By Patrick Hutchison, St. Ninians. 1779.

9. A Wonderful Surprise—to see a professed Presbyter cutting the nerves of Presbyterian Principles. By John Glen, Port-Glasgow. 1779.

10. An Antidote against Slander. 1779. Anon. Relief publication.

11. The Morality and Obligation of Public Religious Vows or Covenants illustrated. By David Walker, minister, Pollokshaws. 1780.

12. A Defence of Covenanting, against the Attacks made thereon in a late Publication, entitled "A Dissertation," &c., by P. Hutchison. In Seven Letters to the Author of that Dissertation. By Rev. George Witock, minister, Anti-burgher Church, Dalkeith.

13. The Duty of Covenanting. Four Sermons. By the Rev. W. Graham, latterly of Newcastle. 1780.

14. The Rev. John Thomson, Kirkintilloch, also published a Pamphlet, in 1780, against Hutchison's Dissertation.

15. Animadversions on Two Pamphlets published by the Rev. Messrs. Ramsay and Walker. By Patrick Hutchison, St. Ninians. 1781.

16. A Candid Examination of the Rev. Mr. Hutchison's Animadversions, &c. By David Walker, Pollokshaws. 1782.

17. Historical Sketches of the Relief Church, and a few Subjects of Controversy discussed; with an Address to the Burgher Clergy. By James Smith, minister, Dunfermline. Edinburgh: M,DCCLXXXIII. By mistake on the title page, it is marked M,DCCLXXXII, an X being wanting.

18. A Candid Vindication of the Secession Church. By the Rev. William Graham, Newcastle. 1790.

19. Testimony-bearing Exemplified. (Preface, by T. H. 1791.) Author, Rev. Thomas Henderson, Reformed Presbytery.

Besides these pamphlets, all of which have been seen and read by the writer, save Thomson's of Kirkintilloch, and Graham's Four Sermons on Covenanting, there was no Testimony published by any of the Scottish Dissenters which did not contain a section more or less bitter against the principles of Christian communion adopted by the Relief synod. In all of them there is a lamentable confounding of the free communion of *saints* with the free communion of the *world*. The thing, however, is now understood, and fighting has ceased.

## X.

### REV. NEIL DOUGLAS.

AS MR. DOUGLAS, after his second mission to the Highlands, acquired considerable notoriety, the outlines of his history are worthy of being noticed. His church at Dundee was far from being in a healthy state when he returned. It had suffered much from his absence. He began to reform it as well as the state, by laying aside preaching-days at the dispensation of the Lord's Supper, and dispensing the ordinance more frequently. Complaints were made to the synod, but the synod, prudently, would not interfere; but recommended to him and his people mutual forbearance about Sacramental preaching-days. The civil authorities in Dundee had distressed his family when he was in the Highlands by calling upon them peremptorily to pay some arrears of taxes, tripling them at the same time, because they had not been paid. Reports were in continual circulation that he was to be seized



and tried for sedition. All these things conspired to make him very uncomfortable in his charge. He therefore gave up his church and repaired to Edinburgh, where he set up a printing press, resolving to support himself as an author and printer, and to preach when he had an opportunity. His propensities led him to be very erratic in his movements, and to preach rather according to his own partialities than according to presbyterian order. Having preached to a rebellious congregation, his name was removed from the roll of preachers by the presbytery of Edinburgh; and, after remaining for a time in this predicament, with no immediate prospect of being again employed as a preacher by the synod, he began to preach in a new denomination. Before he left Dundee there were said to be some complaints, but they never came to the church courts, that he was preaching in a somewhat offensive form the doctrine of *universal redemption*. His views now became more definite, and taking another step, he preached without disguise the doctrine of *universal salvation*. He first went to Greenock as the pastor of a Universalist church, and afterwards settled in Glasgow.

Amid his religious changes, which were much regretted by his brethren, for he was much esteemed, as a man of genius and philanthropy, he continued faithful to his principles of political reform, and even went to a dangerous extreme when he was free from the controlling influence of his co-presbyters. He suffered the restraint of his goods when he was in Edinburgh, but was only the more confirmed in his political principles. In the year 1799, his printing press was broken, his premises entered, and some of his pamphlets seized as seditious. His first wife being a cousin of Lord Melville's, he wrote to him, and, through his interference, the matter was quashed, and his publications restored. While in Glasgow, Government again laid its hand upon him in the year 1817, and he was tried at Edinburgh for preaching sedition. The trial came to nothing. The Glasgow sheriff-officers, who had been appointed as spies over him, could bring no definite charge against him. He returned to Glasgow in triumph. He died on the 9th of January, 1823, aged 73. On his death-bed he said to the Rev. Mr. McDiarmid, of Paisley, who repeated it in presbytery, that if he had his public ministry to recommence, he would study to avoid two errors into which he had fallen. 1. He would preach less on politics; and, 2. He would leave the final condition of the wicked to a good God, fully persuaded that he would do that which was just and right.

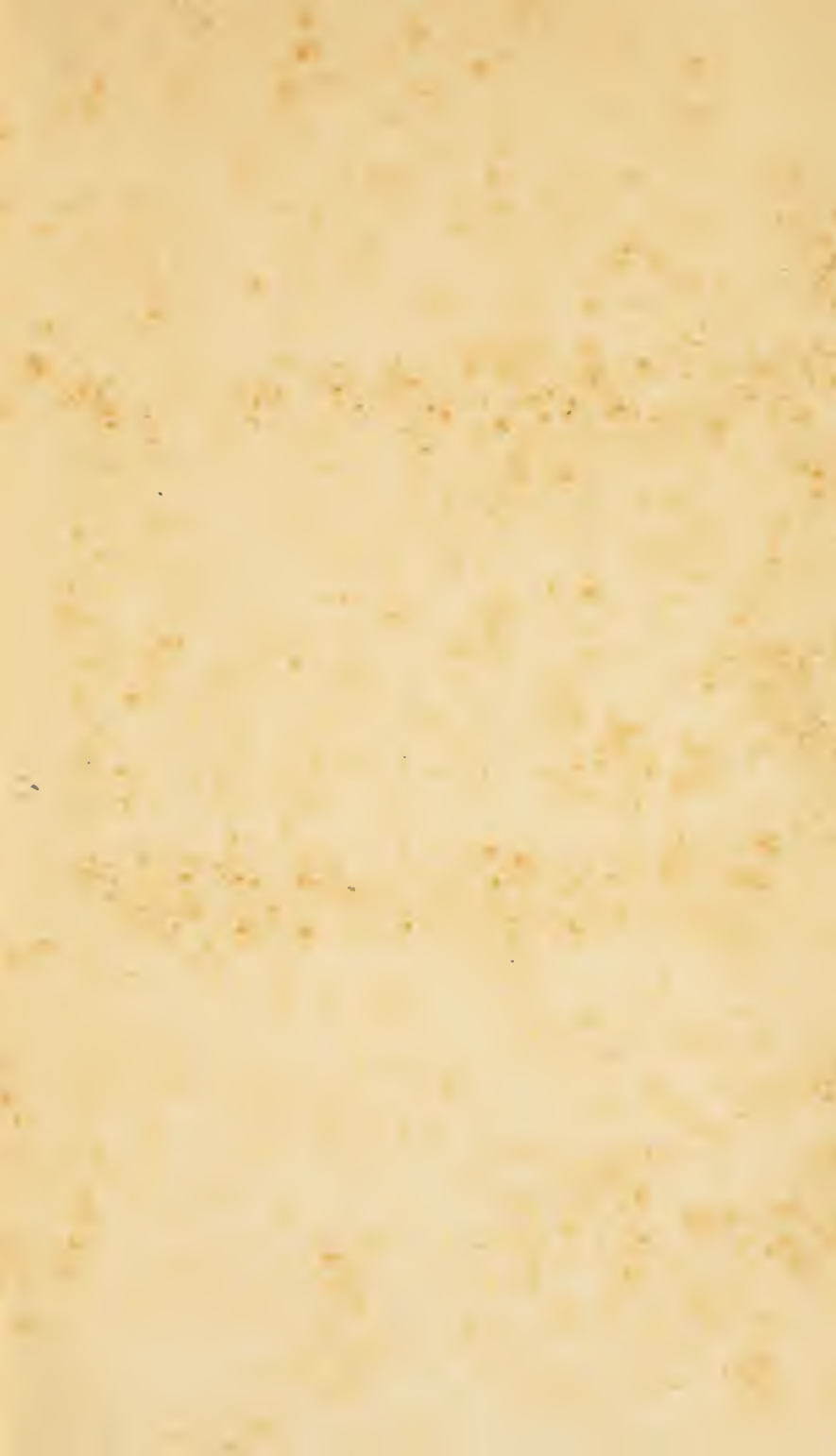
In his character there were many excellent points. Alas! poor man, his mind, when a student, had given way; and he, like others in the same circumstances, was ever afterwards far more the child of *impressions* than those who have always been sane. A hard-hearted world too seldom, in charity, gave him the advantage of this lamentable fact. The tender heart bleeds for him. Ah! what a matter of thankfulness when the judgment always continues as calm and clear in life as at the hour of death; and when our last moments are not corrective of errors, but brightened up with clearer views of gospel truth, always held, always loved, and then esteemed far above rubies!

















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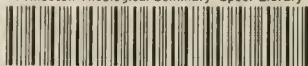




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